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THE WORTH OF WORDS

RALCY HUSTED BELL

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CONCERNING
THE WORTH OF WORDS

Men ought to regard their language as an inheritance to be conserved, and improved so far as that is possible, and ought not to degrade it by reversion to lower types. It should be a matter of conscience not to misuse words; it should also be a matter of conscience to resist misuse of them. Especially should our own language be thus guarded. If, as several unbiassed foreign judges hold, the English language will be, and ought to be, the universal language, it becomes the more a duty to mankind to check bad habits of speech.

HERBERT SPENCER.

THE
WORTH OF WORDS

BY

DR. RALCY HUSTED BELL

With an Introduction by

DR. WILLIAM COLBY COOPER

Third Edition, Revised and Enlarged

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TO MR. AND MRS. C. ODILON MAILLOUX,
WITH MY BEST LOVE

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INTRODUCTION

TO me there is nothing in the world quite so charming as elegant diction. I rate it highest in the esthetic hierarchy, whatever imputation this may put upon my instincts and taste. This, inclusive with the fact that I not only appreciate music (as I believe), but am supersensitive to it. The music thrill, enchanting and transporting as it is, is evanescent; moreover, it cannot be perfectly recalled and reënjoyed. True, we can absorb and retain a musical passage, but we cannot reproduce it in its original strength and beauty. We cannot keep it with us, as we can a memorized poem, for instance.

Poetry — I mean *poetry* — represents the loftiest quality of discourse. This, as I believe, depends upon the fact of manner, not matter — the contention of the ultra critics to the contrary notwithstanding. The high-perched dreamer will tell you that poetry cannot be defined; that it is an elusive essence resident in conception alone, etc. This sort of talk has a mystic fascination all its own, and this contagious glamour is, to most folk, barely less than resistless. I think, however, it can be made evident that whether a literary passage is poetic depends upon the mode in which the thought is presented, rather than upon the thought itself.

It must be conceded that some subjects lend themselves to poetic treatment more readily than do some others; but this is not to admit that there is *any* thought or theme which is wholly without poetic relationships. To illustrate: *Leaves of Grass* is not only a poem, but it is a great poem; and if there is one thing, or fraction of a thing,

in the universe not brought into more or less intimate touch with all of it, I don't know what it is. Shall you say, then, the cosmos is a poem — God's poem? It is such only in that metaphorical sense which constrains us to call a sunset or landscape or beautiful woman a poem — it is like calling virtue a jewel, which figuratively is all right. There is a vast difference between the subject itself and its poetic presentment, even as there is a painful difference among methods of poetic interpretation.

Poetry depends upon the felicitous selection and placement of words. The poet is such by virtue of that peculiar endowment which enables him instantly to distinguish between the commonplace and the elegant; to apprehend interverbal meanings, and to catch the nuances of significant finals. Is this to belittle the poet and poetry? Think: words are symbols of ideas, so that all cohesive speech rests upon a mosaic of ideas. Whether the attractiveness of

this mosaic shall reach above the prosaic gradient will always depend upon whether the writer is poetically gifted.

That the poetry of a passage results from linguistic method alone, is made evident by the fact that a rearrangement of the same words will modify or destroy it.

"The plowman homeward plods his weary way."

This is susceptible of over forty transpositions. Now, unless it is true that each of these transpositions is equally poetic as the first line, we are forced to admit that the poetry inheres in the language, not in the theme.

Plods homeward the plowman weary his way.

So rendered, it has scarcely a hint of poetry in it, and yet the same words are employed, and the same idea is expressed. Disturbing the rhythm has something to do with its depoetization, but not one-fourth enough to account for the resulting difference between

poetic values. The single fact that poetry cannot be translated from one language to another should forever settle the question.

It is the habit of way-up critics to confound motif or spirit or sentiment with poetic essence. Thus:

They are in love. They are widely separated. He trusts in her loyalty, and, in imagination, pictures her as present, with all that means.

That is not *poetry* — it is love, with a tinge of romance. Being a poet, however, he gives us the poetry, thus:

"My spirit yearns for thine to-night,
My soul's immortal queen!
I feel thy soft lips touch my cheek,
And lips and eyes their rapture speak
O'er leagues that stretch between
Us two to-night, Pauline!"

Again: There was a maiden — Madaline. Her lover died. Such was her grief that she fell into a decline. Her faith in the certainty of being reunited with him in the Beyond was as strong

as it was beautiful. In the supreme moment of dissolution, she whispered: "He has come—let me go to his arms!"

Are these facts poetry? No; they only furnish the objective basis for it. Here is the poetry:

"We searched the valley, far and wide,
For the print of a step—but no!
And we combed her hair like the hair of a bride,
And made her a grave in the snow.
And we took the smile with trust so sweet—
And we took the ring—for a sign,
And the name we graved at her head and feet
Was Faith—not Madaline."

The spirit of these verses is very tender and sweet, but the poetry does not make it more so. This spirit is not more sweet in poetry than in prose, and it is common to both. The poetry inheres in the *verbal clothing*.

What, then, is poetry? It is that happy selection and arrangement of words whose aggregate meaning touches the esthetic sense. The habitat of

"meaning" is within the sphere of verbal relationships, and that, as it appears to me, is all there is of it.

All of the foregoing has been written with the purpose of impressing upon the reader the *worth of words.* This worth is more evident in poetry than in any other form of literary composition, and that is why I have discussed poetry. Words are the red corpuscles in the blood of language, and upon language depends social integrity. See the mighty importance of words! Is it less than sacrilegious to mistreat them?

Words being the red corpuscles of language, it follows that the smaller one's vocabulary is, the more anemic will be his brain's children. In this connection, I want to say for myself that I believe it is easily possible for us to be too insistent with reference to simplicity in language. The charm of belles-lettres depends upon the expressing power of words, not upon their usualness and shortness. Pedantry (literary dudery) results from the sac-

rifice of sense to sound—the use of particular words for the sake of those words. This is not less disgusting than is loudness of raiment. I like to read *upward*, not horizontally, nor downward, and therefore I like the writer who will occasionally drive me to the dictionary. True simplicity does not depend upon monosyllabicism or child's-primerism, but upon innocence of stiltedness, or altisonance for its own sake. I do not deny that if there is a verbal four hundred, it has attractions for me.

Whether it is an outcome of idiosyncrasy or of bad taste, it is a fact that I have a small obsolescent list of words. I suspect this does result from idiosyncrasy and so it is probable that others who write have such lists. I don't like "anent." It sounds and looks so thin and inconsequential. I eschew "caption." Besides being a bastard, it is *so hack*. I abhor "maugre." There are tolerable "portmanteau words," but, to me, this is not one of them. Always initial, it imparts a stub-shot effect to a

sentence which my instincts vehemently resent. There is a score of other words which I don't "take to," but their mention would hardly be worth the required space.

I am glad Dr. Bell has written this excellent book. I am glad for three reasons. One reason is that it is so generally and so urgently needed; another is that *he* — of all men that I know, or know of — is the *right* man to have done it; and the third reason depends upon the help it will carry and the pleasure it will give to all who may be wise enough to become possessors of it. Dr. Bell is a poet — not a "mute, inglorious Milton" (they don't and never did exist), but a songful poet. He understands the value of words as only the few do, and in producing this work he has merely justified (consciously or not) the natural stress of a special *oughtness*. "Worth of Words" should be adopted as a textbook in all our schools, academies, and colleges, and it should be owned as a

ready-reference book by all writers. I predict for it an interminable succession of editions.

WILLIAM COLBY COOPER.

CLEVES, O.

TO BEGIN WITH

TO BEGIN WITH

I AM aware that the English language is alive. I know that it is subject to change somewhat comparable to growth; that a tiny twig of to-day may be a useful member to-morrow; that strong branches long doing sturdy service may yet become dead limbs — worthless as fossils; that word-meanings slowly change; and that, therefore, a work which attempts to lay down precise rules for the use of a living language promises more than it can fulfil. Hence this book makes no such promise.

Nor is any plea made for rigidity of the language. Let it expand — since

expansion seems to be the watchword of the English-speaking peoples; but let its expansion be governed by reason and the logic of growth. And if the meaning of a word depends somewhat upon the speaker's *wish* and the hearer's *want*, let want and wish be one, or as nearly identical as possible.

The correct use of words of long-established meaning will never retard the march and growth of language, or tend to fix its movement. Good words, new and old, whether born of slang or dialect or raised from the dead past, should not be overlooked; but they should be used properly, and their precise meanings should not be mutilated and confused.

Still, words have souls, even as they have certain clear meanings, which must be safeguarded if language would serve its full purpose.

Shakspere excels in the metaphorical

use of words. His language is quick with soul; it thrills with imagination; it is the herald of highest thought. His words are winged Mercuries of the mind. And that is why he is the greatest genius of the world. He knew that words put to their best use ought to be more than mere messengers of want and servants of gain, or commonplace slaves of common need; that they ought to do more than serve merely the needs of the flesh. Poetry is a living evidence of this, furnishing, as it does, the highest form of art possible.

It is this *soul* of words that gives them creative force — that awakens new thought by suggestion and subtilly tints the countless and changing shades of meaning. That words may do their best work, it is unwise in many cases to strip them entirely of their primitive meanings, for therein

it is that their very soul is found. Be that as it may.

With some conception of the foolishness, to say nothing of the moral aspect, of pretense, let me say I make no claim to such linguistic accomplishment and culture as would justify me in a serious attempt at original investigation in philology. Neither am I bold enough to write on this subject for scholars.

My sole purpose is accomplished if I have put into ready form some helpful gleanings from worthy authorities on the true *worth of words*.

I know how much good such a book, as I have tried to make of this, would have done me at one time in my life; and I have reason to believe that there are folk enough of the same need to make this little work worth while.

Those who have time and taste for the study of the basic principles upon which all right usage of words is built,

those who are only satisfied with the *why* and *wherefore*, the philosophy and logic of speech, would do well to study Richard Grant White and a few other sound writers on the subject. For, as I have said, I have not attempted to write for scholars — for those who have had the good taste and industry, and sufficient leisure from breadwinning, to become truly and broadly cultured.

On the other hand, those who have little time and less opportunity for this kind of study, and yet have regard for the fitness and need of the right use of words in speaking and writing, may, I am sure, profit somewhat by this effort. Certainly the daily press holds out no insignificant indication of this; neither do the works of many of our well-known writers. And one has only to listen to the talk of folk in general to be assured that almost any work on this subject, however elementary, could not be wholly amiss. R. H. B.

MISUSED WORDS

I

MISUSED WORDS

I CAN scarcely conceive of anything so distasteful as the slovenly use of words on the one hand, or the pedantic display of them on the other. There is, however, a right usage of words which is not only pleasing to the ear, but necessary to the best intercourse between mankind. Words, like firearms, carelessly used are confusing and criminal. They menace the peace and hinder the progress of society. There is no greater abuse than the misuse of words—nothing more dangerous. Words have a clear meaning which should be generally accepted; for to interpret them differ-

ently is to court wide-spread chaos and misunderstanding.

There can be nothing more vexing or mirth-inspiring, according to the dominant humor of the hearer, than the ignorant attempts of the would-be genteel at elegance of speech. No kind of foolishness can outmeasure this. High-sounding words indicate nothing so much as emptiness of thought. The great poems of the world are done in plain and simple words. The sculptured speech of the ages is not of uncertain stuff. Good words, properly used, form the basis of good understanding; they promote good feeling; they are cleanly — a kind of stainless linen for the soul's dress. They are beautiful in their simplicity, clear as honor's self, and pure as the white light of stars.

Let us look at some words most commonly misused:

A and An. *A* used before words beginning with *h* is correct; but the old rule is that *an* should be used before words beginning with a vowel sound, *a* before words beginning with a consonant sound. In Old English *a* was written *an*, but the *n* began to drop as early as 1150. **A and An**

Abortive means of untimely birth, not borne its full time; and it means nothing else. By figure of speech it may be said a thing is abortive which is brought out before its time. But to speak of an *abortive* attempt or act is hardly short of the ridiculous. Lady Anne, in *King Richard the Third*, not only knew how to curse well, but in very good English: **Abortive**

"If ever he have child, *abortive* be it,
Prodigious, and untimely brought to light,
Whose ugly and unnatural aspect
May fright the hopeful mother at the view."

Accident ACCIDENT. An injury may be, and often is, the result of an *accident;* but *injury* and *accident* are two words far from identical in meaning. Said the Abbess Irmingard to Elise as they sat in the witching moonlight:

> "And more by *accident* than choice,
> I listened to that single voice."
> Longfellow, *The Golden Legend.*

Adopt ADOPT. A few years ago this word was oftener misused than it is to-day. Still, its misuse is common enough to warrant a moment's attention. The chief crime against it is one of inversion. For instance, some folk speak of "adopting out" their children. But Beaumont and Fletcher, in *Maid's Tragedy*, say:

> "We will *adopt* our sons;
> Then virtue shall inherit, and not blood."

Advantage ADVANTAGE, "a state of forwardness or advance"; used in the sense of mak-

ing it apply to each of all, is decidedly wrong, since it would be impossible for all to be in advance one of another.

"If it be an *advantage* to man to have his hands and arms free, of which there can be no doubt," and so on.

Darwin, *Descent of Man.*

Affable

AFFABLE, which means, literally, "ready to speak, easily approachable in conversation," has, by authoritative usage and common consent, become "limited to the expression of an easy, courteous, and considerate manner on the part of persons of *superior* position to their *inferiors.*" Milton makes Raphael "the affable archangel," and has Adam to say to him, as he is about to depart heavenward:

"Gentle to me and *affable* hath been
Thy condescension, and shall be honored ever
With grateful memory."

But to speak of some bejeweled and vulgarly bedecked parvenu, with nothing

to her credit except money and fat, as being on some occasion "*affable* to her guests" is clearly an indecent insult to a very decent word. And what could be more unpardonable than to speak of some old pot-bellied politician as an "*affable gent*"?

Affect and Effect

AFFECT and EFFECT. It seems strange that any confusion should result in the use of these two verbs. Yet such confusion is not unusual. *Affect* means to act upon or impress. *Effect*, on the other hand, means to accomplish, achieve. For example: a man may *affect* another's feelings in a manner finally to *effect* his purpose.

Aggravate

AGGRAVATE is very often misused through ignorance and carelessness, and colloquially, in the sense of *provoke*, *irritate*, *anger*, *annoy*. An act may *aggravate* the result of some other

act; but it is as manifestly improper to say that a person is *aggravated*, as it would be to say that he is *palliated*.

"Heaven such illusion only can impose,
By the false joy to *aggravate* my woes."
Pope, *Homer's Odyssey*.

Alike

ALIKE is a bull-maker. Who has not heard, "They are both alike"? And who does not know that the phrase is supported by eminent and long usage? Yet nothing, however old or eminently supported, deserves respectful consideration if it is contrary to reason — to good sense; for if it were not so, the cruel dogmas of our fathers would be the "living waters" of to-day. Now, we may say of two things that they are *alike* — that is, that one is like the other. But *both* means two together; it cannot mean anything else. It carries a sense of unity, and unity

is not comparable with itself. So we cannot say of two objects that "both are equally fine," which is only another way of saying that "both *alike* are fine." In *Psalms* we read: "He fashioneth their hearts *alike*," a correct usage of the word that was not always followed by the Bible writers.

Allow ALLOW. This word is less often perverted than it used to be, even among rustics. It is now generally and properly used in the sense of *admit.* Yet in some parts of the West and South we still hear it used as a synonym of *say, believe, assert; e.g.:* "She *'lowed* them shotes was none er hisn." Contrast this usage with Pope's: "All that the nature of his poem demanded or *allowed.*"

Allude ALLUDE. Perhaps there are few words so often sinned against as poor old

allude. The frequent misuse of this word is enough to ruin an otherwise amiable disposition. It is not a synonym of *say*, *mention*, or *refer*. *Allude* means "to indicate jocosely, to hint at playfully, . . . in a slight, passing manner." It is a good, serviceable word and since its birth has had no other meaning to reasonably well cultured folk.

Almost

ALMOST means very nearly; *most* means greatest in degree. "*Most* beautiful" for *very* beautiful speaks for itself.

Alone, Only

ALONE, ONLY, in many cases may be used interchangeably. However, as a rule, there is a marked distinction between them. An example or two will serve: "When made from the entire wheat, bread is the *only* substance, milk excepted, on which *alone* the

human body can be supported in temperate climates." "And I *only* am escaped *alone* to tell thee" (*Job*). *Only* is also wrongly used sometimes for *except, unless.* Professor Hugh Blair, D.D., in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres*, makes a nice discrimination between the use of these two words. He says:

"*Only* imports that there is no other of the same kind; *alone* imports being accompanied by no other. An *only* child is one which has neither brother nor sister; a child *alone* is one which is left by itself. There is a difference, therefore, in precise language betwixt these two phrases, 'Virtue *only* makes us happy,' and 'Virtue *alone* makes us happy.' Virtue *only* makes us happy, imports that nothing else can do it; virtue *alone* makes us happy, imports that virtue, by itself, or unaccompanied with other advantages, is sufficient to do it."

Alternative ALTERNATIVE is a choice between *two* courses, Mr. Gladstone even to the

contrary notwithstanding. Used in any other sense it gives a looseness of expression which "destroys the force of the Latin derivatives."

ANIMAL. It is nothing strange that, with our numerous newly and rapidly acquired fortunes and our tremendous schemes of national expansion, we should become ashamed of our kinship and in our daily speech deny our brothers. It would seem that we are no longer to be classed with animals. How, then, to classify those highly sensitive souls who think that *animal* means chiefly *brute*, I am certainly at loss to say. Professor Richard Owen, in classifying the Mammalia, lacked present-day sensitiveness on this point to the extent of saying: "Though defenseless, Man can arm himself with every variety of weapon, and become the most terribly destructive of *animals*." Animal

Antecedents ANTECEDENTS. What advantage there is to be gained by the awkward perversion of this adjective is hard to see. To speak of a man's previous or past life as his *antecedents* is highly improper. "*Antecedent*, an adjective, meaning going before, might logically be called a substantive, to mean those persons or things which have preceded any person or thing of the same kind in a certain position." But beyond this, good sense—to say nothing of good taste—cannot go.

Anticipate ANTICIPATE, "to take beforehand, . . . to take first possession of, or to take before the proper time," is not a synonym of *expect*, *foresee*. A man may *anticipate* his sweetheart in fulfilling some dear wish of hers, even before she makes known her desire, or he may *anticipate* some one in doing anything that he succeeds in doing first, or he

may *anticipate* an obligation by meeting it before its time; but he doesn't *anticipate* any act merely by *expecting* to perform the act.

Anxious and Desirous

ANXIOUS and DESIROUS are not synonymous terms. *Anxious* has reference to dread or mental distress, extreme uneasiness of mind; whereas, *desirous* means merely full of strong wish, a longing, perhaps. *Anxious* is clearly a much-overworked as well as a misused word.

"The last thing we need to be *anxious* about is property." Lowell.

"None are so *anxious* as those who watch and wait." Dickens.

"Our days are numbered: let us spare
Our *anxious* hearts a needless care."
Cowper.

Appreciate

APPRECIATE means to estimate fairly, to value justly, or set the seal of proper

worth upon men and things. So *appreciation* is neither an overestimate nor underestimate; it is simply a true estimate. This word is sometimes incorrectly used for *understand*, *realize*, *esteem*, and so on. Both *appraise* and *appreciate* relate to value; *appraise* is always used in a literal sense, whereas *appreciate* does service more largely in a figurative sense.

Approach APPROACH, to draw near to, is improperly used for *address*, *memorialize*, *petition*, *appeal to*. The word has come to have a peculiar secondary meaning, as seen in the phrase, "*approached* the juror."

Apt APT is a little word which depends for correct usage on discrimination and taste. It has been pressed into humiliating servitude and made to mean anything between *liable* and *likely*. A

man may be *liable* to catch smallpox, and yet not *apt* to. A letter properly addressed is *likely* to be delivered. And that a man is *apt* to be married is no unreasonable stretch of the imagination. "Aptness and liability both express conditions — one of fitness and readiness, the other of exposure — inherent in the person or thing of which they are predicated."

Artist

ARTIST has been so rudely maltreated that it has become one of the vaguest words in our language. It may mean anything, almost. About its only value now is to express some esthetic purpose or excellence beyond the commonplace. To say that Raphael, Rembrandt, Millais, Titian, Correggio, Corot, Rubens, Vandyke, and Reynolds were *painters* will never hurt their reputations or confuse them with vulgar house- or sign-painters.

Ascetic ASCETIC, meaning *austere, rigid,* is sometimes confused by bunglers with *esthetic.*

Authentic and Genuine AUTHENTIC and GENUINE. The proper distinction between these words is not always made. A work is *authentic* that bears truthful reference to its subject-matter; it is *genuine* when done by the author whose name it bears.

"This man regularly sent to the French headquarters *authentic* information touching the designs of the allies." Macaulay.

Avocation AVOCATION used as a synonym of *vocation* tends to impoverish and encumber English. A man's *avocations* may cause him to fail in his *vocation.* In the seventeenth and in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, *avocation* meant calling off, diverting, distracting, interrupting, while *vocation* was employed to mean a man's calling—

his profession, business, pursuit. Thus, while a man may have but one *vocation*, he may yet have many *avocations*.

"Heaven is his *vocation*, and therefore he counts earthly employments *avocations*."

"In the time of health, visits, . . . cards, and I know not how many other *avocations*, which they justly style diversions, do succeed one another so thick, that in the day there is no time left for the distracted person to converse with his own thoughts."

"The Soul with pleasing *avocation* strays."
Thomas Parnell (poet).

Awful

AWFUL. That this word should be used as a synonym of *very* seems incomprehensible. Still we hear it misused every day, as "awfully nice," "awfully good," "awfully sweet," and the like. *Awful* means that which inspires or is inspired by awe. Other usage of the word degrades it to the level of slang.

Balance

BALANCE, in the mouths of many, is an abomination. We hear of the *balance* of this thing or that, meaning the *rest*, *residue*, or *remainder*. It may be rightly used, metaphorically, as "the difference between two sides of an account—the amount which is necessary to make one equal to the other"; but it is not the *rest*, the *remainder*, and who so uses it violates correct form.

"A false *balance* is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight."

Proverbs.

Begin and Commence

BEGIN and COMMENCE. These words are perfect synonyms, or as nearly synonymous as words may be. It is only a matter of good taste, it seems to me, that the Saxon word *begin* should be preferred to *commence*, which is not only of greater length, but of foreign extraction. However, Mr. George Crabb makes a slight discrimination in the

application of these two verbs: "To *begin*, respects the order of time; to *commence*, the exertion of setting about a thing. . . . To *begin* is used either for things or persons; to *commence*, for persons only."

Both

BOTH has reference to *two* taken together. To use the word in any other sense is to deprive it of its long-established meaning. Yet the great Chaucer said in *The Knight's Tale:*

"O chaste goddesse of the woodes greene,
To whom *bothe* heven and erthe and see is seene";

which is only another instance of the misuse of words by great writers.

Bountiful

BOUNTIFUL does not mean plentiful. To use it in this sense is perversion. To speak of a *bountiful* dinner is absurd. "Bountiful applies to persons,

not to things, and has no reference to quantity; although quantity in benefits received is often the consequence of bountifulness in the giver."

"With him went Spragge, as *bountiful* as brave." Dryden.

Bring, Fetch BRING, FETCH. The so-called cultivated classes misuse and pervert the meaning of these two words much oftener than rural folk. "*Fetch* expresses double motion — first from, then toward the speaker." A farmer may say to his helper, "Fetch me yonder rake"; that is to say, go and bring it. But speaking to a girl at the spring, he would say, most likely and properly, "Bring me a pail of water." This distinction between *bring* and *fetch* is clearly shown in I *Kings* xvii. 11: "And as she was going to *fetch* it, he called to her, and said, Bring me,

I pray thee, a morsel of bread." And Tennyson correctly says:

"My father sent embassadors with furs
And jewels, gifts, to *fetch* her. . . . "

Buxom. No longer ago than the time of Milton, this word was used to mean "that which readily bows or yields, like the boughs of a tree." Thus, the word was written *bow-some* or *bough-some*, and finally *buxom*, "as *gh* in English began to lose its guttural sound—that of the letter *chi* in Greek." **Buxom**

". . . and this once known, shall soon return,
And bring ye to the place where thou and Death
Shall dwell at ease, and up and down unseen
Wing silently the *buxom* air."

Paradise Lost.

Now the word conveys a very different meaning: "plump, rosy, alluring, and is applied only to women who combine

those qualities of figure, face, and expression." This tortuous change was aided, as Dr. Johnson suggests, "by a too liberal construction of the bride's promise in the old English marriage ceremony to be 'obedient and buxom in bed and board'; it came to be applied to women who were erroneously thought likely to be thus yielding."

By and With BY and WITH. These words are too often misused and confused. The distinction between them ought to be very plain. *By* signifies the *agent; with*, the *means*. A man killed *with* a sword dies *by* violence.

Calculate CALCULATE means "to compute, to reckon, to work out by figures, and hence, to project for any certain purpose, the essential thought expressed by it, in any case, being the careful adjustment of means to an end." So,

when we hear that this or that is *calculated* to do thus and thus, we are unwilling listeners, in most cases, to a vulgar colloquialism befitting a clodhopper.

"A cunning man did *calculate* my birth."
Shakspere.

Calibre

CALIBRE. Some "fine" writers use this word ridiculously. They speak of *higher* calibre, for instance. As well say a thicker diameter or a thinner circumference. "*Calibre* is the measure of the mass contained or containable in a cavity; *e.g.*, the calibre of a bullet or a brain, and hence of a gun or a skull." Its metaphorical sense is expression of capacity, "and its proper augmentatives are of expansion, not of height or depth."

"Coming from men of their *calibre*," said Burke, "they are highly mischievous."

Calligraphy CALLIGRAPHY means more than simple penmanship. So, to say, "Her calligraphy is fine," is somewhat tautological, to say the least, and reminds one of "funeral obsequies." Said Ben Jonson in *Magnetick Lady:*

> "My *caligraphy*, a fair hand
> Fit for a secretary."

Can and May CAN and MAY. There should be no confusion in the use of these words. *Can* expresses ability on the part of a person to do something. *May* signifies liberty to act. Neither sense is changed when the words are used interrogatively.

Candidate CANDIDATE. Within the memory of the present generation there have been several candidates not particularly famous for their *candor*. Yet the two words, *candor* and *candidate*, are from the same source. In Roman times the

candidate was the man *in white*, whose stainless robes were symbolic of the soul which sought political preferment. In our day it is almost questionable whether a candidate has so much as a soul. Mr. Addison aptly remarks: "One would be surprised to see so many *candidates* for glory."

Capable

CAPABLE is frequently used in the passive sense in lieu of *susceptible*. The best usage, however, would seem to require that *capable* should be placed only in the active sense; otherwise *susceptible* would be superfluous.

Capacious

CAPACIOUS does not mean *large*. At best it is, according to Professor Skeat, an ill-formed word. The idea conveyed is something capable of holding, able to contain. The word indicates nothing of degree.

Caption CAPTION. To use this word instead of *heading* is ignorant affectation. Unlike *captain* and *capital*, which are from the Latin word for *head*, *caption* is from *capio*, I seize. Hence it conveys, or should convey, quite a different meaning.

Captivate CAPTIVATE, while closely connected with *caption*, is an example of excusable limitation or legitimate change which common consent may give to a word's meaning. Primarily, it means to seize, to take captive. But within recent years "it has been closely limited to the metaphorical expression of the act of charming by beauty of person and insnaring wiles and winning ways."

Carnival CARNIVAL has been perverted from its original meaning — "farewell to meat," or, according to others, "flesh be strong"— to almost any kind of

public festivity, fun, or frolic. The word is offensive to many, but it seems too firmly rooted in general usage with its later meaning to be dropped, or restored to its early service.

"This feast is named the *carnival*, which being
Interpreted, implies 'farewell to flesh':
So called, because the name and thing agreeing,
Through Lent they live on fish both salt and fresh."
Byron, *Beppo*.

Catch

CATCH. Only a very few of us, maybe, have not heard some well-meaning friend soberly speak of "catching a train" or a car. We understand, of course, what is meant. If the car is at a station or a stop, our friend may reach it or get to it; or if the car is in motion, he overtakes it or catches up with it, perhaps. But in either case his act is slightly different from that of the good housewife who

catches a chicken for dinner, or the boy who "catches the measles" at school.

Character CHARACTER is not a synonym of *reputation.* To say that a woman "bears a bad *character* in her neighborhood" is indefensible, even as unkind—though Mr. Pope, in his *Moral Essays*, says that "most women have no characters at all." "Character is the sum of individual qualities." It is the sunlight of the soul that may penetrate the outer world, and may not. Or, it may be likened to a candle under a bushel. *Reputation* is what is generally thought of the *character* judged by outward and visible signs.

Chastity CHASTITY. This word is very generally confused with *continence* — a common error owing to an unnatural doctrine. The idea that a continent spinster is more chaste than wife and mother is

born of superstition and brutality. An idea so monstrous as this has no place in a clean and decent heart. No woman ever lost purity or chastity merely through marriage. Love never defiles. The mothers of men are as chaste as their continent sisters blasted by an unnatural drought. Let us be sensible.

Chemise

CHEMISE, pronounced *shimmy* by the illiterate, means in French a *shirt.* There is no excuse for the English-speaking woman to call her first undergarment a *chemise.* If a distinction be sought in name between a shirt worn by a woman and one worn by a man, it would be better taste to drop the cant word *chemise* for *smock*, a word in general use until about 1750. Swinburne uses the word *smock* correctly in *May Janet:*

"Her father 's drawn her by both hands,
He 's rent her gown from her,
He 's ta'en the *smock* round her body
Cast in the sea-water."

Chiefest "CHIEFEST," said one of the brightest men I ever knew, "may be correct; but when a thing is *chief*, it is at the head; and how can anything be ahead of it?"

" . . . my *chief* care
Is to come fairly off from the great debts."
Shakspere.

Chiefest is most often used by little writers, great only in pretension.

Citizen CITIZEN. Spread-eagle "orators" and the presumptuous daily press are chiefly to blame for the misuse of this word. To use it as the French of the First Republic used *citoyen* is an empty affectation; *citizen* as a synonym of *denizen* has entirely lost its very an-

cient meaning. The Old French word was *citeain.* "A citizen is a person who has certain political rights, and the word is properly used only to imply or suggest the possession of these rights." To say that "several citizens pulled the wagon out of the mire," is as indefensible as it would be to say that several Mormons or Populists lent a hand.

"All inhabitants within these walls are not properly *citizens*, but only such as are called freemen." Raleigh.

CLAIM. Herbert Spencer, and his is a name to conjure with, objects to the use of this word instead of *say*, *assert*, *affirm*, *allege.* A moment's thought will convince us that his objections are well founded. "I *claim* that this is so, or not so," as the case may be, is clearly a perverted use of the word — a misapplication to be strongly reprobated. The word does not express the in- Claim

tended meaning, while there are sundry words that do. "A thing *claimed* is a thing which may be possessed."

Climax CLIMAX. The modern and popular misuse of *climax*, meaning highest degree, is much the same as to use *ascending scale* in the sense of the top note in a keyboard, or to make *declining years* signify death. Originally and properly the word meant "a figure in rhetoric that proceeds by *degrees* from one thing to another." Thus, Mr. Emerson, in his accustomed good English, says: "These are *ascending stairs* (a climax)—a good voice, winning manners, plain speech, chastened, however, by the schools into correctness. . . ."

"Some radiant Richmond every age has graced,
Still rising in a *climax*, till the last,
Surpassing all, is not to be surpassed."

Granville.

Condign

CONDIGN (well merited) was formerly employed in connection with such words as *praise* and even *price*. For instance, Fabyan, in his *Chronicle*, speaks of a "condygne price"; and Sir Thomas More, in a letter to Margaret Roper, of "condign praise," and she uses the phrase, "grace of condignity," *i.e.*, deserved grace. In our modern days we rob the word of half its usefulness by applying it only to punishment. Moreover, a false meaning has been added, making *condign* a synonym of *severe*, and often tautologically coupling it with *deserve*. For example:

"'He deserves some *condign* punishment,' cried Mrs. Grantham, severely."

Condone

CONDONE means simply to forgive. Yet many well-known authors use it as a synonym of *compensate* and *atone for*, which, however, does not alter the correct meaning of the much-abused

word. *Condone*, perhaps, should be relegated to its previous legal or technical use, since in any other sense it is nearly or quite superfluous.

Consider CONSIDER. A court may *consider* a question — and sometimes it does. A good business man may *consider* a proposition for days. In other words, he may weigh it carefully, ponder it, ruminate upon it. So, that which is great and strong enough to deserve serious thought and attention is *considerable.* And a man of consideration is one whose ability, character, and position give weight to his opinion. But *consider* is no legitimate synonym of *suppose*, *think*, or *regard.* *Consider* is formed on *considere*, which means "to sit down deliberately, to dwell upon, to hold a sitting, to sit in judgment; and hence *consider*, by natural process,

came to mean, to ponder, to contemplate." Poor old Lear says:

"Thou wert better in a grave, than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies.—Is man no more than this? *Consider* him well."

CONSTANT means firm or steadfast, and is loosely used otherwise. Yet we hear *constant* and *constantly* employed for *frequently*, *continually*, *often*, and *all the time*. Shakspere in *Othello* uses the word correctly: **Constant**

"The Moor . . . is of a *constant*, loving, noble nature."

CONSUMMATE. When a newspaper tells us where and under what circumstances a marriage was *consummated*, it tells something that is none of our business —something that other folk do not care to know. It meddles with the personal rights of two persons, which **Consummate**

is, quite obviously, impertinent and needless. Of course, we all know what *consummates* marriage, just as we know a good many other things that are not publicly discussed. So it would be better, I think (and quite all that is necessary), to chronicle where and how the ceremony took place rather than to make too much of that which good taste would ordinarily exclude.

Contemptible CONTEMPTIBLE is misused at times for *contemptuous*, which relates to the feeling of *contempt*, while *contemptible* indicates a quality of the object which excites *contempt*. Thus, one may have a *contemptuous* opinion of a *contemptible* person.

Convene CONVENE. The meaning of this word is often warped by persons not wholly illiterate. Presidents have been known to misapply the word. Still, there is

nothing wonderful about that, as Presidents are not always chosen for their wisdom. But the President does not *convene* Congress—he *convokes* it (calls it together); then Congress *convenes* (comes together).

CONVENIENT as a synonym of *near* is not good usage, for *nearness* may be a mere incident to the idea expressed by *convenient.* **Convenient**

COUPLE. This word, however long and widely perverted, means something more than *two.* It means two that are coupled — that are bound together by tie, bond, or intimate relationship. Thus, "a man and a woman are made a couple by the bond of sexual love, which even the legal bond of marriage cannot accomplish; for a man and his wife may be separated, and be no longer a couple." **Couple**

Crime

CRIME. Much confusion exists with the words *crime*, *vice*, and *sin*. There should not be any. "Crime is the violation of the law of a particular country. . . . Sin is the violation of a religious law, which may be common to many countries, and yet acknowledged by only a part of the inhabitants of any one." Vice is a violation of the moral law; "a course of action or habit of life which is harmful to the actor or wrongful to others." *Crime*, therefore, need be neither sinful nor vicious, and *vice* neither criminal nor sinful, and *sin* neither criminal nor vicious, whereas something may be all three: criminal, sinful, and vicious. "The idea of continuity, or of possible continuity, of a habit or action is conveyed in the word vice." Mr. Blackstone defines *crime* as "an act committed or omitted in violation of a public law either forbidding or commanding it."

Decade

DECADE has come to mean from "any aggregate of ten," to a period of ten years. But our writers apparently have not determined whether *of years* should be suppressed. Mr. E. C. Stedman writes merely "a decade," while Mr. Gladstone and Anthony Trollope almost invariably say "decade of years." If *Centenary* and *century* are not wrong when used without qualification, then there is doubtless as good a reason for using *decade* without.

Decimated

DECIMATED. Learned war correspondents, given to affectation and unwarranted conceit, frequently use this word in the sense of depletion by slaughter. Speaking of a hard-fought battle, they will say that So-and-so's forces were "terribly decimated." But *decimate* would mean to select every tenth man; and to use *decimation* as a general

word for *heavy loss*, *great slaughter*, is of course mere twaddle.

Deduction and Induction

DEDUCTION and INDUCTION are often confused. *Deduction* is the process of explaining the law of particulars from the law of the (particulars in) mass; whereas, by *induction*, we ascend to general truths by considering the law of particular truths.

"To prove or disprove the *induction*, we must resort to *deduction* and experiment."

Tyndall, *Fragments of Science.*

Defalcation

DEFALCATION. Individual ignorance and general carelessness crystallized into a custom are to blame for the misuse of this word. *Defalcate* is a verb "which means to lop off, and so detract from." *Defalcation* is the noun. It is plain to be seen, therefore, that one may defalcate and not be a defaulter; and one might default without

his act being a *defalcation.* Mr. Burke uses the word in its correct sense:

"To show what may be practically and safely *defalcated* from them."

Late State of the Nation.

DEMEAN means "to conduct or bear oneself, to behave." But popular, that is to say, absurd and frequent, usage nowadays has perverted the word, making it signify "to lower or debase." Perhaps some recent shining scholar regarded it as composed of the Latin *de* (down) and the English *mean* (base). But Chaucer in his *House of Fame* uses the word in its better sense: **Demean**

"To lat a foole han governaunce
Of thing that he cannot *demeyne.*"

DÉPÔT is "a place where stores and materials are deposited for safe-keeping," as in a freight house. Very sel- **Dépôt**

dom is a passenger station a *dépôt*—and the word is incorrectly used, therefore, in the vast majority of cases.

Description DESCRIPTION, an account of, that which is written down fully, copied, does not signify *kind* or *sort*. For example: "His coat was not always of the most stylish *description*." Or again: "His manners were, in truth, not always of the most amiable *description*," both of which are wrong.

Detect DETECT, which means "to discover or expose," is often misused for *distinguish*, as: "They may be *detected* at once by their extremely knowing look."

> "Sham'st thou not, knowing whence thou art extraught,
> To let thy tongue *detect* thy base-born heart?" 3 *Henry VI.*

Deteriorate DETERIORATE simply means to make or become worse, which is wholly dif-

ferent from *detract* or *take away from.* F. W. Farrar, even, misuses it in his *Epochs of English Poetry:* "Does it, in your eyes, *deteriorate* from Milton's peculiar greatness that he should not have given us the conception of Falstaff?"

Directly

DIRECTLY meant, primarily, the shortest distance between two points — a right line; and therefore came to mean *at once, immediately, straightway.* But the word is frequently used in the sense of *when, as soon as,* which is indefensible. For example: "Directly Colonel Ingersoll finished speaking, the bishop rose to reply." Again: "I was more interested in the disreputable person who mounted the box beside our driver *directly* we got out of our city gate." "It is he [Chaucer] alone who has conversed with nature *directly* and without an interpreter," said Craik —

which shows still another and a well-founded usage of the word.

"He proceeded *directly* along the street."
Scott.

Dirt

DIRT. Dirty devils, to speak metaphorically, have, as a rule, much to say of *dirt*. They speak of "*dirt* roads," among other things, meaning, in general, unpaved roads. They use *dirt* as a synonym of *ground*, *earth*, *loam*, *gravel*, *sand*. They are not esthetic enough even to hint that it may be matter in the wrong place. Primarily, secondarily, and all the time *dirt* means the most offensive kind of *filth*. "A thing that is *dirty* is foul." Now make the best of it.

Discount

DISCOUNT means "to deduct *part* of the price for ready-money payment." Figuratively, one might suggest that Professor Bain's remarks be discounted,

perhaps; but that a *professor* should say that some one's "opinion should be *wholly* discounted" seems rather liberal, to say the least.

DISPOSE. **Dispose**

"Sens God seeth everything out of doutance,
And hem *disposeth* through his ordinance."
Chaucer.

"But God, who secretly *disposeth* the course of things." Tyndal.

"The rest themselves in troupes did else *dispose*." Spenser, *Faërie Queene.*

There are many other examples to show that *of* is not needed to complete the transitive sense of this verb. Indeed, this common usage of the preposition in this case is of recent origin; for even now well-spoken English often says, "They *dispose* [not dispose of] themselves in groups to their liking."

Divine DIVINE. A few souls that might be called divine have lived in this world — a few divine men and women. But to call a clergyman *a divine* is blasphemy against reason, no matter if uttered even by Chaucer. And yet it is no worse to use this adjective as a noun than to call a philosopher "a philosophic," a child "a juvenile," or books for children "juveniles," or an obituary article "an obituary," or a magazine "a monthly." All of which is weak, absurd, and contrary to reason. Even such a master of English as W. D. Howells sins against this word:

> "These soldiers, scientists, authors, sailors, statesmen, artists, philanthropists, and *divines* are not every one of a celebrity that has penetrated the popular mind the most deeply or the most widely, and a plebiscite might have shown a different choice."
>
> *The Hall of Fame*, in *Harper's Magazine*.

However, Mr. Howells sins in good

company; for the Doctor says of Lady Macbeth:

"More needs she the *divine* than the physician."

Dock

DOCK. A dock is not a wharf or pier. Neither is it something one can fall off of. We don't speak of a hole as a suitable thing for folk to fall off of. Yet it could be no more absurd to say some one fell off of a pit than that he fell off of a *dock*. "A dock is an open place without a roof, into which anything is received, and where it is enclosed for safety." A prisoner may stand in a dock at his trial; and a ship may be taken into a dock for repairs.

Don't and Doesn't

DON'T and DOESN'T. The first is the contracted form of *do not; doesn't*, of *does not* — facts which some of us don't remember.

Dress

DRESS is a word widely misused by women; and a great many men do not

escape the mistake when speaking of woman's apparel. *Dress* does not mean *gown*, although it is much used in that sense. *Dress* is a verb, and means "to set right, to put in order." As a general nominative term it includes the entire apparel of either man or woman. *Dresser* is correctly used when what is meant is, where certain things are put in order. But a *gown* is not "a *dress*," and not always a *frock*, since frock belongs both to masculine and feminine attire.

Drive and Ride

DRIVE and RIDE. *Drive* means and always has meant to force on, "to urge forward, to expel, to eject"; and *ride* means "to be borne up and along, as on a beast, a bird, a chariot, a wagon or a rail." Some folk, who would be very precise, use these words erroneously and confusingly. In the following, from II *Kings*, the distinction is rightly made:

"So Jehu *rode* in a chariot, and went to Jezreel . . . And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again; and the *driving* is like the *driving* of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously."

Editorial

EDITORIAL is a poor conversion of a colorless adjective into a noun. What is meant by the use of this word is, really, *leader* or *leading article.* The proper descriptive name for articles in a newspaper or magazine on leading topics of the day — real or imaginary — is *leading articles.* But in this strenuous era (in which even *strenuous* is an overworked word) the saving of time is thought to be a cardinal virtue. *Editorial* is one word, whereas it requires four words to say, "the editor's *leading article.*" And so, perhaps, we shall have to tolerate *editorial.*

Either

EITHER, "as a distributive adjective, always retains the notion of duality . . .

Concerning the use of *either* and *neither* as conjunctions, it seems to be generally conceded that these words, although originally contemplating no more than a duality, may be freely extended to any number of terms." Even our own dear Holmes, in *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*, says:

"There have been three famous talkers in Great Britain, *either* of whom would illustrate what I say about dogmatists well enough for my purpose."

If Dr. Holmes's attention had been called to that use of *either*, however, we may be sure that he would have said, correctly, *any one*, instead. But Tennyson, in *Morte d'Arthur*, says:

"For surer sign had followed, *either* hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere."

The use of *either* in the sense of *each* is very properly condemned. For in

tends to the confusion of thought and degradation of language. "*Each* refers definitely to every one of any number; *either*, indefinitely to some one of two," although excellent authority, however far that may go against reason, would seem to warrant its usage in two or more.

ELIMINATE originally had a mathematical signification: "Causing a function to disappear from an equation, the solution of which would be embarrassed by its presence." Metaphorically, it is rightly used in the following from *Clyde's Greek Grammar:* "Culture, in so far as it affects the relation of the mind to the objects of thought, may be said to consist in the continual *elimination* of the accidental from the necessary." But to use *eliminate* in the sense of *elicit*, *elucidate*, *separate*, *rid*, *select*, *estrange*, *alienate*, *extinguish*, Eliminate

elaborate, *sift*, *shed*, or *brought out*, is decidedly wrong. Though this usage has the support of some more or less eminent writers, it is nevertheless faulty, and none the less to be condemned by the lovers of good English.

Enceinte ENCEINTE is a cant word from the French which the prurient and foolish use for *with child*. Among decent people no phrase could be purer or sweeter than *with child*. *Enceinte* and "in the family way," for *with child*; *accouchement* and *confinement* for *delivery*, are hideous expressions which no one uses who is either careful or wise. What could be more simple, elegant, and pure than Mr. Southey's,

"And many a childing mother died"!

Esquire ESQUIRE. Well-meaning folk who wish to be polite, or to conform to a sheep-like custom which has no further mean-

ing to them than that other sheep-heads continually do the same thing, will address a letter to John Smith, *Esquire.* Just what they mean by adding "Esq." to a man's name has, I believe, not yet been determined even by sensible persons.

EVACUATE means to make something empty — not *to go away.* Even in a military sense the word is incorrectly used unless mention is made of the place departed from; since the *evacuation,* at most, is a mere concomitant of the going away of the forces. Evacuate

EVERY. A desire to be elegant, without knowledge enough to be correct, might be fit cause for pity, were it not for the puffed-up presumption of the ignoramus. This class of folk speaks of "the men deserving every praise," of having "every confidence" Every

in doing this or that, of rendering "every assistance" in such and such emergencies, and so on. Such misuse of the word *every* is nothing short of foolish. "*Every* is a separative . . . It means of all, not all in a mass. It cannot, therefore, be applied to that which is in its very nature inseparable." A much-admired British novelist says, "*Every* human being has this in common"; which is absurd. "All human beings might have something in common; but what every man has, he has individually for himself." And *every* person means each of all.

"He wolde thresh, and thereto dike and delve,
For Christes sake for *euery* poure wight."
Chaucer.

Evidence and Testimony

EVIDENCE and TESTIMONY are not convertible terms. *Evidence* pertains to mental conviction; *testimony* relates to knowledge of fact.

EXAMPLE is often used as a loose synonym of *problem*. A problem may be an example of the operation of a rule, but not necessarily; in any case it is not essentially exemplary. Example

EXECUTED. Criminals, even murderers, are never *executed*. To *execute* a human being is an impossibility. Man may be hanged, beheaded, shot, killed with electricity, or, generally, put to death. But executed he is not. A law may be executed, but a person — never! "To *execute* (from *sequor*) is to follow to the end, and so to carry out, and to perform; and how is it possible that a human being can be executed?" Not even "a plea of metaphorical or secondary use" will save the word in this sense. This perversion of a good word serves no useful purpose and has no justification. Executed

"And Cassio following him with determined sword,
To *execute upon* him." Shakspere.

"Even the warrant of the Chief Justice of England could not be *executed* without the help of a company of musketeers."
Macaulay, *History of England.*

Exemplary EXEMPLARY, "that which serves for an example . . . The misuse of *exemplary* confines it to examples that should be followed." This word should be restricted to its proper meaning; for all examples are not to be followed. A man may beat his wife or child, for example. And while his conduct is *exemplary* it is also extremely reprehensible and brutal.

Expect EXPECT does not mean *suppose*, *think*, *guess*. It "refers only to that which is to come, and which, therefore, is looked for (*ex*, out, and *spectare*, to look)." This word used in the sense of "I

expect you did this or that yesterday," is decidedly incorrect.

"Untimely storms make man *expect* a dearth:
All may be well; but, if God sort it so,
'T is more than we deserve or I *expect*."
King Richard the Third.

Experience

EXPERIENCE is a word that deserves more than passing attention. But more than this I can scarcely give it. There would be no excuse for this book if I were to attempt to treat the subject exhaustively. Besides, I know of no living author who could improve on Richard Grant White's *Words and their Uses*, and *Every-day English*. Certainly, I shall not try. *Experience* made to serve as a verb is, at best, very questionable usage, and surely not good taste. To say that a man was captured by savages "at whose hands he is *experiencing* cruel treatment," is wrong; for what is meant is that he is *receiv-*

ing or *suffering* cruel treatment. "Experience is the passing through a more or less continuous course of events or trials. A man's experience is the sum of his life; his experience in any profession, business, or condition of life, is the aggregate of the observation he has had the opportunity of making in that profession, business, or condition." *Experience* and *experiment* are closely related, both coming from the same Latin word. "But *experiment* is voluntary trial, *experience* involuntary." An experienced person is one of experience, one who has observed, tested, tried, proved,— not one who has been observed, tested, tried, proved. We have heard that "the price of cotton is the highest we have *experienced* for years." But we don't experience prices any more than we experience crops. It would be much simpler and far better to say, "The price of

cotton is the highest we have *had* for years."

EXTEND (stretch forth). Why an intelligent person should insist on the use of *extend* instead of *ask* or *invite* would be hard to answer if intelligent persons did such things. Fortunately, lecture committees and other like bodies, or pompous office-holders, are the usual sinners against good taste in the use of this word. Would it not be better to say that some distinguished person or other had been *asked* or *invited* rather than that "an invitation had been extended"? I think so. **Extend**

"*Malvolio.* I *extend* my hand to him thus, quenching my familiar smile with an austere regard of control." *Twelfth Night.*

FEMALE is broadly expressive of sex; it is not restricted to human beings. Used instead of *woman*, the word is **Female**

inexcusable—for any she-brute is equally a *female*, no more, no less. While the *Third Book of Moses* is extremely barbarous, it illustrates the proper use of this word very well:

"And if his oblation be a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offer it of the herd, whether it be a male or *female*, he shall offer it without blemish before the Lord."

Financial, Pecuniary, Monetary.

FINANCIAL, PECUNIARY, MONETARY. These words do not mean the same thing, and are, therefore, not interchangeable. *Financial* has a broader signification than either *monetary* or *pecuniary*. We speak of the *financial* condition of a government, for instance; whereas *pecuniary* is applied to value, and *monetary* to money matters and transactions.

Fire

FIRE means neither to *throw* nor *shoot;* it is not a synonym of either. We

don't *fire* stones, bullets, arrows, or what not. Wives don't even *fire* hot tea into the faces of their exasperating husbands. The slovenly use of *fire* as a synonym of *shoot* came about through the introduction of firearms. Thus, the command to "Give fire!" meant merely to put fire to the powder. Naturally the command of arms, "Give fire!" was shortened to "Fire!" and hence *fire* was loosely used as a synonym of *shoot* and finally of *throw*. But Fortinbras' command was: "Go bid the soldiers *shoot*."

Flow

FLOW. The perfect and passive participle of this verb is formed in *flowed*. Jean Ingelow, therefore, used the word incorrectly in *A Story of Doom, and other Poems:*

"So far the shallow flood had *flown* [flowed]
Beyond the accustomed leap of landing."

So, William Black, in *A Daughter of Heth*, makes the same mistake:

"The road going down the moor had been washed red, and the rapid and drumly stream had *overflown* [overflowed] its narrow banks."

Shakspere, however, says:

"The river hath thrice *flowed*, no ebb between." *King Henry IV.*

Fly and Flee

FLY and FLEE. If these words are to be used one for the other indiscriminately there is no valid reason for making a difference between *sit* and *set*, or *lie* and *lay*. Language has a soul that guides it as to taste and need — that beautifies and intensifies it — that marks subtilty of discrimination, and so enriches it. Thus, in *Judges* iv. 17, "Sisera [lighted down off his chariot and] *fled* away on his feet," is better than — and quite different from — saying that he *flew* away on his feet.

"*Flee* is a general term, and means to move away with voluntary rapidity; *fly* is of special application, and means to move with wings, either quickly or slowly."

"Behold now, this city is near to *flee* unto."
Genesis.

FUTURE is often strangely and incorrectly used even by some of our best writers, in the sense of *subsequent*, *later* or *after*. For example: Future

"The Abbé Lamennais, whose previous and *future* career, I may assume to be generally known, came to demand justice . . . "

And Mr. Dickens, in *A Tale of Two Cities*, says:

"If a picture of the château as it was to be a very few years *hence* [thence], and of the fifty like it as they were to be a very few years *hence* [thence], could have been shown to him that night, . . . "

Again, Robert Chambers, in *Traditions of Edinburgh:*

"Her *future*, it has been reported, *was* virtuous and fortunate."

Now, as *future* means about to be, coming, it is hard to understand how such mistakes could be made by such skilful writers. But it falls back to the simple fact that, after all, the best of us, and most knowing, are human and fallible — the same in speech as in other things.

Generally

GENERALLY. Mr. Alfred Ayres thinks that *generally* is too often used instead of *commonly*, *usually* or *ordinarily*, and makes the following distinctions between the words:

"*Commonly* is opposed to *rarely* or *exceptionally*.
"*Generally* to *restrictedly*.
"*Usually* to *occasionally*.
"*Ordinarily* to *exceptionally* or *rarely*."

Mr. Ayres further says:

"The distinction that should be made in using these words is often very delicate, too delicate, indeed, for it always to be made even by the cleverest and most painstaking. Nevertheless, however delicate the distinction, it is none the less worth while to try to make it."

Gentleman, Lady

GENTLEMAN, LADY. Mere *man* and *woman* are terms hardly suited to some of our ambitious society folk. In view of our growing national importance, our subjugation of inferior races, our princely fortunes, our foreign decorations dangling from the thin necks of some of our natives, and such other nonsense as is born of a purse-intimacy with kings, queens and emperors of the Old World, this is not surprising and really needs no comment. Some things are simply too idiotic to bear serious discussion.

Gentry GENTRY, "the condition of gentleness in blood"—or those who are in that class by position.

Get GET means "the attainment of possession by voluntary exertion; . . . figuratively, a man gets him to bed, gets up, gets to his journey's end—in brief, gets anything he wants and successfully strives for." But he does not *get* sick, *get* a pain in his ear, or *get left*. A very general misuse of this word is to express simple possession. To say, "I have got a good home," is almost as bad English as to say, of a vagrant, "He ain't got no home at all." But it is correct to say, "I have gotten home," meaning that I have reached home; and that a man, through this effort or that, has gotten something or other. Mere ownership may be perfectly expressed by *have; get* implies exertion. It is said, and in most excellent English,

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." It is incorrect to say a man *got* his property by inheritance; property may come to one that way, but it is never *gotten* that way. And this reminds me of a friend who objects to *gotten*. He told me of a man who telegraphed his wife that he had *gotten* tickets for the theatre. He was amazed when he arrived at his home to find that she had invited eight guests to accompany him and her, as he had "got *ten* tickets."

Graphic

GRAPHIC refers to painting or drawing, therefore means picturesque, pictorial; "and cannot rightly be used in speaking of sounds or scents — of anything, in fact, that might not be illustrated." So it should not be said that a *graphic* account of this thing or that was given orally.

Gratuitous GRATUITOUS. Neither by the cultured, nor by those who speak "plain English in a plain way," is this word used to express a mild form of impertinence. It is not a synonym of *unwarranted*, *intolerable*, or *unreasonable*. But it means *without payment*, and nothing else, regardless of the dictionary, even. Indeed, dictionaries have lately come to be, in many cases, "the pernicious record of unreasonable, unwarranted and fleeting usage."

"The peasantry were forced to give their *gratuitous* labor six days in the year."

Macaulay.

Grow GROW means something more than mere condition of passage from one state into another. And while it may be permissible to say that something grows mild, grows dark, grows faint, it would be more accurate to use *becomes* instead of *grows*. The word

really means *to increase;* it rightly expresses enlargement or development. To say that a thing grows less or grows smaller day by day is not profoundly reasonable, at best.

"Let knowledge *grow* from more to more."
Tennyson.

Have and Were

HAVE and WERE. A desire of the untaught to appear learned often leads them to use *were* instead of *was.* They will say: "I *were* going to do this or that," instead of I *was.* The same class for the same reason will misuse *have* for *has.* As, "The company *have* arrived," for *has* arrived.

Help

HELP. It is not difficult sometimes to be over-critical; especially is this true when the critic is careless or ignorant. The homely expression, "I can't help it," is good enough English for any one. It is a compact and correct way

of saying, "The matter is beyond my aid." Words to be rightly used need not be as inflexibly handled as those of a legal document written by the attorney of a money-grabber.

Help meet HELP MEET. These words are frequently written with a hyphen; but they are not a compound word. Used in the sense of *wife*, there is nothing more absurd. The fact that we are told in *Genesis*, "I will make him an help meet for him," and the fact that some imbecile or thoughtless person compounded the words into a synonym of *wife*, account for the subsequent perversion of this expression. What is meant in *Genesis* is, "that woman was given to man as a help that was *meet*, fit, suitable for him," and nothing else. A very clever friend once told me that the combination "help meet" suggested to him the story of a preacher

who took as his text the familiar passage from *Job:* "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." He said: "My friends, I shall divide this subject into three parts. Fust, skin-worms. Second, what they done. And third, what the man seen after he was eat up."

HUMANITARIAN is a theological word meaning "one who denies the godhead of Jesus Christ, and insists upon his human nature." To use it in any other sense is affectation. For, when you say that a man is *humane*, you cover all the ground that you could possibly cover by calling him a *humanitarian.* **Humanitarian**

ICE-WATER, ICE-CREAM, mean merely *iced water* and *iced cream.* The confusion resulted perhaps from inadvertency in speaking. **Ice-water, Ice-cream**

Imminent IMMINENT, "projecting over, overhanging, impending," is not a synonym of *dangerous*. This use of *imminence* in Gilchrist, "Never was my residence (?) in such fearful *imminence*," is incorrect, not to say ignorant.

"Their eyes were *imminent* on worldly matters." Milton.

Implicit IMPLICIT. In the use of this word very many writers ignore both its primitive and secondary meanings, making it a loose synonym of *absolute*, *unquestioning*, *unbounded*, and the like. The original and definite meaning of *implicit* is held to be, "to enfold, entangle, involve." Its secondary or metaphorical meaning is very well shown in the following from George Eliot's *Romola:*

"Tito's *implicit* desires were working themselves out now in very *explicit* thought."

Also in G. H. Lewes's *Aristotle:*

"A metaphor is an *implicit* simile; and a simile is an *explicit* metaphor."

In and Into

IN and INTO. "When one is *outside* of a place, he may be able to get *into* it; but he cannot do anything *in* it, until he has gotten *into* it."

Inaugurate

INAUGURATE. This word is very commonly misused in the sense of *begin, open, set up, establish.* "To *inaugurate* is to receive or induct into office with solemn ceremonies."

Individual

INDIVIDUAL is a poor substitute for *man, woman, person;* and may only correctly "stand for person when members of a class are viewed as units of a whole." The word, nevertheless, has gradually come to be nearly synonymous with *person;* but it should be used sparingly in this sense, since *in-*

dividual really means any one thing or unit.

Infallible INFALLIBLE "were best restricted to the meaning of 'not liable to err.'" In this sense it is used by Shakspere, though he also speaks of "hopes that are fallible" (that may be disappointed). The word is needlessly made to do service, by those who should know better, in the sense of *inevitable*, as: "Ye shall be *infallibly* damned"; and "The *infallible* fruit of the forty-third Elizabeth," whatever that may mean. Dean Swift, in *Gulliver's Travels*, misuses this word several times.

"God's *infallible* prouidence and predestinacion." Joye, *Exposition of Daniel.*

Initiate INITIATE means *begin* — nothing more, nothing less. "He took the initiative," is certainly not more scholarly than, "He began."

INNATE, to be born in, inherited, is incorrectly used by some of us, more through slovenliness, perhaps, than ignorance. Arthur Griffiths, in *Memorials of Millbank*, speaks of "*innate* depravity, due to early training," among certain young persons. He might have said with no more incongruity of terms that the "*congenital* lameness of Isaac was owing to a bear-trap into which he unwittingly put his foot when he was ten years old." Byron, in *Childe Harold*, uses the word aright when he tells of "that untaught *innate* philosophy." Innate

JEW is a racial term, not a religious. The word is properly used to designate a race rather than a religion. "A Jew is a Jew, whether he holds the faith of his fathers or leaves it for that of Christ or Mohammed." Jew is as sweet and good a name as Englishman, American, or any other — why not? — and to a Jew

whole-witted person it suggests no taint or odium.

Jewelry

JEWELRY. This word has been introduced since the days of Shakspere. It is not found in the Bible, Johnson's Dictionary or Milton. Burke speaks of "the jewelry and goods of India," using the word as a general term — which is very well. But to use it to express any particular jewels "is of very low caste." How would this sound from a Hebrew prophet? "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my *jewelry*." Now, we may import goods from India; from these goods we may make some specific articles of dress, as, for instance, a gown; but the gown is no longer goods: goods are not worn. So, *jewelry* is a somewhat abstract term; we do not wear jewelry, though we may, and many of us do, wear

jewels. In the same way *spicery* might well be used as a general term, but in speaking of the spices in a pudding we would say *spices*, not *spicery.* A shopkeeper may buy and sell jewelry exclusively, but the earrings, brooch, necklace, rings and watch worn by a woman are not her jewelry, but her *jewels.* Originally, perhaps, *jewelry* was used in the sense of place, as *armory*, *belfry*, *library*, or condition,— which is moral place,— as *slavery*, *beggary* and the like.

Kinsman and Kinswoman

KINSMAN and KINSWOMAN. *Kinsman* is a fine old English word. Nothing is gained by substituting *relation* or *connection;* on the contrary, such substitution makes decided loss. Relations may be various in kind, and "connections are of still wider distribution." But *kinsman* means only one thing— a man's kin is only of his own blood.

So *kinswoman* is infinitely better than "that poor, mealy-mouthed, ill-made-up Latin interloper, *female relation.*"

Leave LEAVE is a verb that requires an object. It is ridiculous, as it is improper, to say, "He *left* this morning," or "I shall *leave* this evening." Of course the mention of the place referred to is necessary if one would speak good English.

Lengthen LENGTHEN means simply to make or grow longer, just as *heighten* means to make higher, or *strengthen* to make stronger; and is wrongly used as a synonym of *long, tiresome.* For instance, "He astonished a literary friend who had accompanied him by repeating, without hesitation, a *lengthened* passage from one of the *Eclogues* of Virgil." Contrast this with III *Kings* (1551): "And if thou wilt walke in my wayes

and keep myne ordinaunce . . . I will *lengthen* thy days also."

LESS for FEWER. *Less* is an adjective of quantity; *fewer* of number. "*Less* than seventy-five" is of course wrong; the phrase should be "*fewer* than seventy-five." **Less for Fewer**

LIE, LAY. It should not be hard to remember that *lay* expresses transitive action, and that *lie* means rest. If this difference between the two verbs is borne in mind there ought to be no difficulty in using them correctly. For example: **Lie, Lay**

"Hush, my babe, *lie* still and slumber."

"Now I *lay* me down to sleep."

The fact that the preterit of *lie* is *lay* may have caused some confusion in the use of the verbs.

"In the slumbers of midnight the sailor boy
lay."

And further, "that this expression of the most perfect rest is identical in sound with the expression of the most violent action:

"'*Lay* on, Macduff,
And damned be he who first cries, Hold, enough!'"

These verbs are incorrectly used in *Childe Harold*, and in Senate Rule No. 11 and House Rule No. 42, in the Rules of the Senate and the Rules of the House of Representatives of the United States. But in the beautiful book of *Ruth*, chapter iii. 4, 7, 13, 14, the correct uses of these words are finely discriminated.

Like, As LIKE and AS both express similarity; but *like* compares things — *as* compares action or existence. "When *as* is cor-

rectly used, a verb is expressed or understood"; which is not the case with *like*. We may say correctly, "Fred is *like* William," or that "the girl is *as* tall *as* the boy."

Limb

LIMB means *leg* no more than it means *arm* when applied to members of the body. Only very squeamish persons of very sickly sentiment ever use this word exclusively for *leg*. *Limbed* in Old English meant joined. A *limb*, properly, is "anything which is separated from another thing, and yet joined to it." So, *limb* for *leg* is nonsensical, and as improper as it would be to call the *thigh* the *leg*, or to insult the good old respectable Anglo-Saxon word *belly* by calling it *stomach*. Such misuse of good words is inexcusable and disgusting.

Limited

LIMITED means confined to a certain boundary, and is faultily used in the

following: "The cost of the volume was formerly five shillings; it is now published at the *limited* [low or reduced] price of one shilling." Again, "If we may found an opinion on *limited* [slight] acquaintance with the writings of Tieck."

Loan LOAN is a noun; it is the "completed act of lending or the thing *lent*." Unless one be an ignorant snob, it were better to say that one *lent* this or that to So-and-so, rather than *loaned* it.

"The Lord give thee seed of this woman for the *loan* which is *lent* to the Lord."

I *Samuel* ii. 20.

Locate LOCATE, as a stilted word for *place* or *settle*, is better not used. Mr. White calls it "a common Americanism, insufferable to ears at all sensitive."

Love, Like LOVE, LIKE. The distinction between these words has always existed; and it

is not likely that they will ever be so confused that speakers and writers of education will be uncertain which to use. A man *loves* that which is very dear to him, to which he is devoted, in which he is absorbed, for which he would readily make sacrifice, as his wife, child, friend, the truth, his home even. But his *liking* is of wider application, of different quality and less degree. One could hardly be said to be in *love* with a piece of pie; though we often hear expressions of that sort. And no one, much less a religionist, would be uncertain as to which word to use in the well-known commandment of *Matthew:*

"Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

Manufacture

MANUFACTURE is the making by hand of things. But this age of machinery

has almost robbed the word of its meaning, even as the machine has taken from the hand its deftness and skill.

Marry MARRY. The woman, according to the etymology of the word *marry*, and the conditions she assumes by the act of becoming a wife, is *married to* the man. Only in "speaking of the ceremony is it proper to say that he married her." The correct form of announcement is: Married, Mary Mapes to John Doe.

Militate MILITATE is a poor word of comparatively recent introduction, and a member of a bad family to which *necessitate* also belongs.

Miscreant MISCREANT originally meant merely an unbeliever, but later came to have a vile signification.

Mutual MUTUAL. Mr. Fitzedward Hall, in his *Modern English*, has fully exposed the

frequent blunder of using this word for *common*. A mere reference here will serve the purpose. *Mutual* always and rightly conveys an idea of reciprocity. A few examples will show the right and wrong usages of the word:

"*Common* enmities are said to cement friendship."

"After the hurry of our recognition was over, he pointed out two of our *common* friends [*i.e.*, two of our friends in common] in the room."

"Our former correspondence was forthwith renewed, with the most hearty expressions of *mutual* good will."

"As you and I have no *common* friend, I can tell you no private history."

"These particulars I learned from the vicar, when we quitted the room, that they might be under no restraint in their *mutual* effusions."

On the other hand, the incorrect use of the word we have in *Our Mutual Friend*,

by no less a light than Charles Dickens. Also in the phrase, "Shakspere, the *mutual* ancestor of Englishmen and Americans."

"They met so near with their lips that their breaths embraced together . . . When these *mutualities* so marshal the way, hard at hand comes the master and main exercise, the incorporate conclusion." Iago to Roderigo.

Nasty NASTY is certainly not a sweet word. Few persons make "nasty retorts" or say "nasty things." The word is not a synonym of *irritating* or *ill-natured;* it means *filthy*, and very filthy at that.

Nice NICE, which originally meant foolish, simple, ignorant, has undergone many strange changes of meaning — from "foolishly hard to please, fastidious, precise," to "foolishly attached to," and so, down to modern times, when it is used as a loose and superfluous synonym of

agreeable, dainty, pleasing. "It is now applied to a sermon, to a jam tart, to a young man, in short to everything." And "men wax *nice* and effeminate."

NONE is merely a contraction of *not one* or *no one*, and properly should be treated as a singular. Still, common usage is a strong plea for making it plural. "*None* so poor to do him reverence," illustrates a correct usage of the word. **None**

OBNOXIOUS, "liable or exposed to harm," is now incorrectly used in the sense of *offensive.* The two words, *obnoxious* and *offensive*, with but a single meaning, are not needed; and unless the former is used rightly it is better to drop it. Dean Swift helped to pervert the word, but Milton used it in its proper sense in *Samson Agonistes:* ". . . *obnoxious* more to all the miseries **Obnoxious**

of life." Again, "*obnoxious* first or last to basest things."

"Man, in public trust, will much oftener act in such a manner as to render him unworthy of being any longer trusted, than in such a manner as to make him *obnoxious* to legal punishment." Alexander Hamilton.

Observe OBSERVE. This word has been consistently deflected from its primary meaning, "to keep carefully, and hence to heed," until it means also *to attend to*, *to take note of*, *fulfil*, "to keep in view, to follow with respect and deference, *e.g.*, 'and let thine eyes *observe* my ways.'" But the would-be elegant often use it instead of *say*, as, "I *observed* to him that such and such was not the case"— which is not only wrong but absurd.

"There are people who *observe* the rules of honor as we *observe* the stars, from afar off."
Hugo.

Operate

OPERATE, used in the sense of *work*, is well called "a linguistic outrage." For example: "The Company will *operate* their new plant"; "the cost of *operating* a new line or factory"; "this new *automatic* device may be *operated* with ease." These are clearly outrageous applications of the word. Whatever objection may be made to *work*, *working*, in this sense is certainly not one "of mere pedantry."

Paradox

PARADOX, in modern parlance, is applied to "a figure of rhetoric that couples two *seemingly* conflicting ideas — as, Cicero's 'clamorous silence,' Tacitus's 'conspicuous by their absence.'" Thus, "a paradox is a *seeming* absurdity, and to say that 'such and such a thing *seems* a paradox' is to be guilty of the tautology that 'it *seems* a seeming absurdity.'" Mr. J. S. Mill, in *The Subjection of Woman*, makes

this error: "This may *seem* a *paradox*, but it is nevertheless a fact." And Professor Jacques Loeb, as quoted in *McClure's Magazine* for March, 1902, says: "It *seems paradoxical* that life may be thus maintained by a powerful poison."

Partake PARTAKE, to share, to take part of (with another), bears its meaning on its face. Yet how often do we see it written, "He *partook* of a frugal repast," meaning he ate of. *Partook* and *repast* are words in fit company, each with the other.

"They mention him as if to use his name
Was in some measure to *partake* his fame."
Churchill.

Partially PARTIALLY, "the adverb of *partial*, means with unjust or unreasonable basis"; biased. It should, of course, not be used for *partly*, which means something else.

"Ye have not kept my ways, but have been *partial* in the law." *Malachi.*

PARTY. A person in a contract may be referred to as a *party*, otherwise he is a person. In a like manner an ornament or a piece of furniture in one's house is no longer an *article*, but a vase, table, chair, or whatever it may be. Party

PATRON used for *customer* is an implication that the customer buys not what he wants, but because the seller needs the money. Patron

PER. To use a Latin preposition with an English word is not the best of taste. If a thing costs so and so much *a* (or *the*) pound, *a* piece, or *a* ton, why not say so rather than *per* pound, *per* piece, *per* ton? Per

"A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds *a* year."
Goldsmith.

Person PERSON rightly means an individual of the human species; but it is also used in the sense of body — one's person. Originally, however, it was applied to a mask such as was used by actors in the unroofed theatres of Greece and Rome; and from this usage came *dramatis personae: i.e.*, from indicating a fictitious man it came to mean a real one; and from meaning a man (or woman) it was later applied to the body almost identically as it was at an earlier time to the mask or thing through which the actor spoke, that is to say, the fleshly mask or body of a human being. This is a legitimate and normal change running through different shades of meaning.

Persuade PERSUADE used in the sense of *convince* is supported by good authority. Nevertheless, this use of the word robs it of a tender and delicate meaning; since

one may be persuaded (gently allured) to act contrary to conviction. Miss Mitford meant *advise*, doubtlessly, when she said, "which is one reason why I never *persuade* young ladies to publish."

PLASTIC, it would seem, by reason and best usage bears primarily only an active sense: "skilful in molding." "Every man has a *plastic* gift of happiness." And Shelley, in his *Adonais*, says: **Plastic**

"While the one Spirit's *plastic* stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear."

Professor Huxley is authority for a similar use of the word:

"They could point to the arborescent forms assumed by hoar-frost and by sundry metallic minerals as an evidence of the existence in nature of a '*plastic force*' competent to enable

inorganic matter to assume the form of organized bodies."

Science and Hebrew Tradition.

Plenty PLENTY does not mean many; it means of sufficient quantity, and should not be used in a numerical sense, nor in place of the adjective *plentiful.*

Ponder PONDER, to weigh, to think over deliberately, is perhaps best used as a transitive verb, putting the matter weighed or considered in "the objective case without the intervention of a preposition." Thus, Milton "*ponders* all events"; "Mary kept all these things, and *pondered* them in her heart." However, good usage sanctions the intervention of a preposition. In *King Lear* we read:

"This tempest shall not give me leave to
ponder
On things that would hurt me more."

Again, George Campbell, in *The Irish*

Land, says: "There is much to be *pondered over* . . . "

POPULAR, as any one should know who is at all familiar with Latin, has reference to the populace, in the sense of pertaining to, suited to, pleasing to, originating with, or coming from the people. That is the original meaning of the word, and its present meaning. Three hundred years ago, however, when the common people — the masses — were not held in very high esteem by the literate, and when little advantage was to be had in flattering their vanity, *popular* was almost an epithet of contempt: a derogatory expression of baseness. In the words of Pistol, "Art thou base, common, and *popular?*" But now, owing to social and political revolutions and a higher moral and intellectual condition of the people, *popular* has come to be used as a word

Popular

of approbation. Still, the best usage does not quite free it from the taint of opprobrium. But to use *popular* in the sense of *admirable* or *good* is clearly wrong.

Portion PORTION "is a part set aside for special purpose, or to be considered by itself." It should not be used merely in the sense of *part.*

Predicate PREDICATE "means primarily to speak before, and, hence, to bear witness, to affirm, to declare." In English it is a grammatical term for the element of a sentence which affirms. But to use it in the sense of an "action predicated *by* a body *upon* circumstances or statements, is simple absurdity."

Preposterous PREPOSTEROUS, which has come to mean utterly ridiculous, absurd, has lost its old vigorous significance of

"hindmost first"; and because it has, English is made poorer by a useful word. The following example shows the sense in which it was formerly and correctly used:

"In making the first chapter treat of Holy Scripture, the Confession begins at the wrong end, and is thus literally *preposterous*, in the sense of putting that first which ought to be last." Fergus Ferguson,
Reconstruction of the Creed.

Present

PRESENT. In this country foreign ministers are *presented* to the President; but otherwise persons are *introduced* (which doesn't mean quite the same thing), the younger to the older, the man to the woman, and, on the same principle, the hod-carrier to the poet or painter.

Previous

PREVIOUS, an adjective, is not uncommonly used as an adverb without the

adverbial termination, *ly;* as, *previous to* instead of *previously to. Subsequent, independent* and *relative* are words similarly misused.

Privilege PRIVILEGE. At first this word signified "a bill or law *against* an individual," but long ago it was employed in the sense of "an ordinance *in favor of* an individual, a prerogative." It is a curious fact that certain words are very generally coupled and pressed into service regardless of their fitness for the yoke. This is the case with "*rights* and *privileges*"—"the *rights* and *privileges* of the people"! As a matter of fact, the people can have no *privileges*, since that means something peculiar to one or a number as distinguished from the others. But where the people of one State are distinguished, not from each other, but from those of another State, there *privilege* is rightly used.

In this sense the word is correctly used by General Pierce in his Inaugural Address (1853):

"So long as he [*i.e.*, every citizen of the United States] can discern every star in its place upon that ensign, it will be his *privilege*, and must be his acknowledged right, to stand unabashed even in the presence of princes, with a proud consciousness that he is himself one of a nation of sovereigns."

Proceed

PROCEED means *go*. Why not say *go*?

Prolific

PROLIFIC means "teeming, fruitful, productive." But the word is not a synonym of *frequent*. So, when we hear of "prolific jokes," we may be prepared to hear from the same source of "teeming lambs and fruitful grapes" — indeed, one need not be surprised to hear anything from such a person.

Proposition and Proposal

PROPOSITION and PROPOSAL are often confused. But *proposition* is the word more often misused. "A *proposi-*

tion is something to be considered; a *proposal*, something to be acted on. We admit or deny the truth of a *proposition;* we accept or reject a *proposal.*"

Quality QUALITY means "essential property, distinguishing character," good or bad. The French *qualité*, however, is restricted in meaning and suggests only *good* qualities. It would seem that writers of English, in many cases, have attempted to ape the French in this undesirable restriction. Even a proclamation of the Privy Council makes this use of the word: " . . . with members of other principal gentlemen of *quality.*" If this is correct, no fault can be found with a "lady of quality."

Quite QUITE properly conveys the idea expressed by *completely, in a finished manner, entirely.* It came to us from the French *quitté* (discharged), and

should not be applied to a word of such indefinite signification as *number*. "Quite a number," therefore, is an unjustifiable phrase. The adverb *quite* should qualify an adjective, as: quite a large fortune, quite a brilliant man, and the like — rather than "quite a fortune," etc.

"Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven *quite* from me?" *Job* vi. 13.

Railroad

RAILROAD is a word very generally misused in this country for *railway*. "A *way* is that which guides or directs a course, or that upon which anything moves or is carried . . . A *road* is the ground ridden over, the land appropriated to travel . . . The calling a *way* a *road* is a venial offense compared to that of calling a *station* a dépôt."

Reading

READING, used in the sense of *rendering*, is a mere "cant term in critics'

phraseology." Charles Dickens has this to say of it in *Our Mutual Friend:*

"By the way, that word *Reading*, in its critical use, always charms me. An actress's Reading of a chambermaid, a dancer's Reading of a hornpipe, a singer's Reading of a song, a marine painter's Reading of the sea, the kettle-drummer's Reading of an instrumental passage, are phrases ever youthful and delightful."

And finally, the slang phrase: "That *reads* well"— how irresistible!

Real estate

REAL ESTATE is a compound technical term in law, and is incorrectly used in any other sense. A man may own both real and personal estate. Yet in the language of every-day life he would not speak of depositing personal estate in the bank, or of buying personal estate at this shop or that. Why, then,

should he speak of real estate, meaning houses and land? "Our papers have columns headed in large letters, 'Real Estate Transactions,' the headings of which should be Sales of Land," says Mr. White.

RECOLLECT is not a synonym of *remember*. One may not remember a line or stanza of verse, but, possibly, by trying he may *re-collect* it. **Recollect**

RECUPERATE is both useless and pretentious. It is much better to say *recover* and be done with it. *Recover* is a good word — *recuperate* is decidedly bad. **Recuperate**

REEKING, fuming, steaming, implying disagreeable odor. This word is commonly misused in the sense of dripping with an oozing filth, covered with nas- **Reeking**

tiness. But E. A. Poe, in *The Assignation*, uses the word correctly:

"The senses were oppressed by mingled and conflicting perfumes, *reeking up* from strange convolute censers, together with multitudinous flaring and flickering tongues of emerald and violet fire."

Reference REFERENCE is often used instead of *recommendation.* A man may *refer* some one to somebody else as willing to *recommend* him. In doing so he gives his *reference*, but his *recommendation* is another matter, which may or may not be given.

Religion RELIGION is one thing — *piety* another. There have been and still are very many *religions;* but of *piety* there never was but one, and never can be more. *Religion* is a bond assuming certain rites performed in relation to a supreme being and some other state of existence.

Piety is a kindly inspiration to do good, show mercy, and in all things to act properly. Thus it were *possible* for religionists of the world to be pious, a probability hardly to be dreamed of, though devoutly to be wished.

Remit

REMIT means "to send back, and hence to relax, to relinquish, to surrender, to forgive." But the commercial world uses the word habitually in place of *send*. The custom is silly and unauthorized; but so long as a majority of mankind devotes itself almost wholly to money-getting it will doubtless continue to speak of "sending remittances," and to complain of not receiving them promptly.

Rendition

RENDITION does not mean *rendering*. It means surrender, giving up to another. To speak of an actor's *rendition* of his part in a play is ludicrous.

Replace REPLACE. The blundering use of this word is almost universal. Why, who shall say? The word means, to restore to its place. Yet it is found almost everywhere wrongly used for *displace*, *succeed*, *supersede*, *take the place of*. What could be more unwarranted than: "The rich man has everything that wealth can procure to *replace*, as far as possible, the comforts of civilization"? (C. A. Payton, in *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa.*) Or again, "That is, with Israel, religion *replaced* morality"?

Repudiate REPUDIATE. Why not *reject*, *disown*, *refuse* or *condemn?*

Residence RESIDENCE is a pretentious word. It is far better to say that a man has a *home* where he *lives* than that he has a *residence* where he *resides*. Exception may be made, however, in case of

lordlings, parasitical princes, crowned-heads and wealthy American toadies. These superior folk *reside*, always.

RETICENCE, "to keep silence," "the quality of holding one's tongue," should not be confounded with *reserve*, to keep back. A *reserved* man is not necessarily a *reticent* man, nor is a *reticent* person always and in all things *reserved*. *Reserved* is a wider and less definite term than *reticent;* and there should be no difficulty in using these words correctly. **Reticence**

RETIRE is only another priggish word when used for *going to bed.* **Retire**

REVEREND, HONORABLE. These words are adjectives, mere epithets, and not even courtesy titles. Their correct use requires the article *the.* For instance, The Honorable John J. Ingalls, The **Reverend, Honorable**

Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, The Venerable Bede.

Right RIGHT does not mean *ought*—and should not be used in the sense of *obligation.* "He has a *right* [meaning he ought] to support her now that he's married her" is inadmissible.

Rooster ROOSTER, an animal (usually a bird) that roosts. The *cock* of the domestic fowl is no more a *rooster* than is the hen or a wild robin. And what indelicacy there could be in correctly using the word *cock*, instead of incorrectly the word *robster*, would be hard to understand even if the usage were less grotesque and nonsensical.

Sample-room SAMPLE-ROOM. The fact that a man keeps a bar-room, ale-house or tavern in which he has a bar is no evidence that he is ignorant, unless he permits

"sample-room" to disfigure a sign which should read *bar*, *bar-room*, *wine-room*. But if he takes to *sample-room*, why, he advertises himself at once an ignoramus.

SANCTUARY. Does not *church* sound as well? **Sanctuary**

SECTION was used first in the West, where unoccupied lands were divided into sections based upon parallels of latitude and longitude. Thus, settlers came to speak of this or that *section* of country. The word crept eastward and finally was incorrectly used for *vicinity*, *quarter*, *region*, *neighborhood*. **Section**

SHALL and WILL. Much has been written on this idiom of English to little purpose other than cŏnfusion. Those who make a habit of the proper use of *shall* and *will* are usually bred **Shall and Will**

to it. Still, Mr. White has made the distinction between these auxiliary verbs very clear; so that without going into the subject at length we may yet grasp the salient points to our advantage according to our needs.

Shall, which in Anglo-Saxon is *sceal* (ought), signifies primarily obligation. *I shall* originally meant, *I ought to do*, and finally "came to mean, *I am about doing* — to be, in fact, a mere announcement of future action more or less remote." *You shall do*, therefore, is inappropriate in speaking of future voluntary action of another, unless obligation is imposed, or announcement made of another's action over which is claimed some control.

On the other hand, the Anglo-Saxon *willan* or *will* radically signifies purpose, determination, intention. So, *you will* assumes that it is the pleasure or purpose of the other to do thus or so.

In the mere announcement of future action it is proper to say, *I* or *we shall*, *you*, *he*, or *they will*. An official order should read, *you shall*, therefore, except for the courtesy due an inferior from one in a superior position. *Should* and *would* follow likewise.

"That we *would* do
We *should* do when we *would*; for this '*would*' changes,
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;
And then this '*should*' is like a spendthrift's sigh,
That hurts by easing." *Hamlet.*

The following arrangement of *shall* and *will*, *would* and *should*, will help those who may be uncertain as to the proper use of these words:

FIRST PERSON

Simple Future	I *shall* go.	We *shall* go.
Contingent or Obligatory	I *should* go.	We *should* go.
Interrogative Simple	*Shall* I go?	*Shall* we go?
Interrogative Contingent, or Obligatory . . .	*Should* I go?	*Should* we go?

SECOND PERSON

Simple Future	You *will* go.
Contingent or Obligatory	You *should* go.
Interrogative Simple	*Shall* you go?
Interrogative Contingent, or Obligatory . . .	*Should* you go?

THIRD PERSON

Simple Future	He *will* go.	They *will* go.
Contingent or Obligatory	He *should* go.	They *should* go.
Interrogative Simple	*Will* he go?	*Will* they go?
Interrogative Contingent, or Obligatory . . .	*Should* he go?	*Should* they go?

FIRST PERSON

Determining Future	I *will* go.	We *will* go.
Contingent Determining	I *would* go.	We *would* go.
Interrogative Obligatory Determining . . .	*Should* I go?	*Should* we go?
Interrogative Contingent [rare]	*Would* I go?	*Would* we go?

SECOND PERSON

Determining **Future** . . . . . **You *shall* go.**
Contingent **Determining** . . . . . **You *would* go.**
Interrogative **Determining** . . . . . ***Will* you go?**
Interrogative **Contingent Determining** . . . ***Would* you go?**

THIRD PERSON

Determining **Future**	**He *shall* go.**	**They *shall* go.**
Contingent **Determining**	**He *would* go.**	**They *would* go.**
Interrogative **Determining**	***Shall* he go?**	***Shall* they go?**
Interrogative **Contingent Determining** . . .	***Would* he go?**	***Would* they go?**

From *Every-day English*, by Richard Grant White.

Sick and Ill. *Sick* is a good strong useful word in no danger of being supplanted by *ill*, though some folk would have us think so. Sick and Ill

Sit and Set. Much has been written of these words — but I will be brief even at the risk of dogmatic assertion. Mr. Richard Grant White treats of *sit* and *set* at length. The following may be taken as an epitome of his views, which are doubtless correct: Sit and Set

Sit is an active but very intransitive verb, which means, to put one's self into a position of rest. *Set* is an active transitive verb, which means, to cause another person or thing to *sit*. Thus, one may quietly *sit* down, or boisterously give somebody else a *setting* down, either in a metaphorical or physical sense. The principal parts of *sit* are *sit*, *sat*, *sitten*. But the present, preterit and past participle of *set* are

the same form, *i.e.*, *set*. This should be borne in mind, else one might be guilty of saying, "She *sat* the pitcher down upon the ground."

We read that it was prophesied that Christ should come "sitting upon an ass," "and, therefore, his disciples took a colt and 'they *set* him thereon.'"

The proper poultry-yard use of the words is this: "The hen-wife *sets* the hen, but the hen *sits*." The following examples are to the point:

"As the partridge *sitteth* on eggs and hatcheth them not." *Jeremiah.*

"And birds *sit* brooding in the snow."
Love's Labor's Lost.

"Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like *sat'st* brooding on the vast abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant."
Paradise Lost.

The sun *sets*, instead of the sun *sits*, is an English corruption of the Anglo-Saxon word *settan* (settle). Fifteen hundred years, or more, ago it was not said in Anglo-Saxon either that the sun *sets* or *sits* — but that the sun *settles* or *sinks;* and the word *setl* in *setlgange* was used as a noun, not as a verb: in the sense that the sun was going "seat-ward — toward his seat." "All the stronger, therefore, is the conclusion that it is right to say the sun *sits* or takes his seat, and wrong to say that he *sets:* the clear distinction between the two Anglo-Saxon verbs *sittan*, to sit, to go down, and *settan*, to place in a seat, to fix, being remembered."

Sociable, Social

SOCIABLE, SOCIAL. Between many words carelessly or ignorantly used as synonyms, there is a fine distinction which enriches the language, by holding unto words of similar meaning a

rare delicacy of expressing various shades of meaning. This distinction should be preserved so that the language may lose none of its range, power and plastic elements. Few words serve as a better example than *social* and *sociable.* "The meaning of *sociable* is, fitted for society, ready for companionship, quick to unite with others — generally for pleasure. *Social* expresses the relation of men in society, communities or commonwealths."

Some SOME. Shallow critics have, now and again, attacked this word with marked unreason. One of the oldest and best-established words in the English language, *some* (*som* or *sum*), has come down to us without change. For some fifteen hundred years this good old word has been used not alone by the literate but by the common people as well. And so long as any Anglo-

Saxon word has force and meaning in our speech, *some* will remain what it is —a good and useful word. Any number of illustrations from the best English writers could be given showing its sturdy worth. A few will do: O. W. Holmes says, "*some* fifty"; Thackeray, "And *some* five miles on the road" and so forth; Prior, "And Phyllis is *some* forty-three"; Sir Walter Raleigh, "Being encountered with a strong storm *some* eight leagues to the westward of Sicily"; Shakspere,

"Has she forgot already that brave prince,
Edward her lord, whom I, *some* three months since,
Stabbed in my angry mood at Tewkesbury?"
King Richard the Third.

Again in *Twelfth Night*,

"*Some* four or five attend on him:
All if you will."

And John Ruskin, in *Venice*, says:

"There is a channel, *some* three miles wide, between the city and the main land, and *some* mile and a half wide between it and the sandy breakwater called the Lido," and so forth.

Spare SPARE is a word widely used in its colloquial or secondary sense. For instance, "Say, Mister! kin yer *spare* me a nickel?" The meaning of the word is, "not to waste, to forbear to destroy, to save."

"Woodman, *spare* that tree!"

Still, this is not the only sense in which the word is idiomatically used. But in *Othello*, Shakspere says, "while I *spare* speech."

"But *spare* to speak, and *spare* to speed;
She 'll aiblins listen to my vow:
Should she refuse, I 'll lay my dead
To her twa een sae bonnie blue."
Robert Burns, *The Blue-eyed Lassie.*

Special

SPECIAL has been used for at least six hundred years in a sense which is too comprehensive and loose, in Mr. White's opinion. He suggests that it be restricted to mean, "peculiar in kind; particular as opposed to the general." Personally, I shall not gainsay the usage of six hundred years in respect to this word.

Splendid

SPLENDID is overworked and indiscriminately used. The word cannot rightly be applied to common or inferior excellence; nor is it less than coarse to use it in the sense of very great excellence. "The sun is splendid, a tiara of diamonds may be splendid, poetry may be metaphorically splendid. But all good poetry is not splendid."

Spontaneous

SPONTANEOUS is not a synonym of *voluntary*, though it is often used as such. "Religion to be efficient must

be sincere, and it cannot be sincere without being *spontaneous* [voluntary]." Spontaneity depends upon an inherent quality or tendency — an impulse — and an impulse is not subject to volition.

State STATE is a very stilted word for *say*. A party to a court proceeding may be called upon to *state* his case. But persons *say* things, wise, foolish or mediocre.

Station STATION.

> "A *station* like the herald Mercury
> New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill."

This word means *a standing:* a railway *station* is merely a railway standing — "a place where trains and passengers stand for each other."

Stopping for Staying STOPPING for STAYING. *Stopping* is the act of one who, or that which, stops.

In no sense does it mean continuance in a place; though it might in certain cases imply the beginning of a *stay*. The word is often used carelessly as a synonym of *staying*. For example, "What hotel are you *stopping* at?" or "I am *stopping* here or there." I am *staying* at this place or that, is of course the correct thing.

"So, I *stopt* at a poor inn, where I *stayed* all night." Benjamin Franklin.

Storm

STORM "is a tumult, a commotion of the elements." It may happen with or without rain; and "rain may fall as gently as mercy." And yet we hear it said, "It is storming," when it is merely raining.

Such

SUCH relates to quality; *so* relates to degree. "I never saw *such* a high wall, a beautiful woman, a long road."

It should be: I never saw *so* high a wall, *so* beautiful a woman, or a road *so* long. "I never saw *such* a man," is also correct.

Superior SUPERIOR doesn't mean merely *able, good, virtuous.* Many persons are all of this, and superior only in a relative sense. "A *superior* person," is seldom correctly used.

Supervise SUPERVISE. *Oversee* is the proper word.

Talented TALENTED has been hotly assailed by Coleridge, Carlyle, R. L. Sheil, Miss Lucy Aikin, Dean Alford, Samuel Bailey, Macaulay and others. But it has been also very well defended by Mr. Fitzedward Hall. While it may be urged that *talented* is malformed and that it rests on a false metaphor, yet why it should be thought "wholly repugnant to the English tongue" is hard

to understand; especially when such words are accepted and in every-day use as *booted*, *spurred*, *bearded*, *cultured*, *leisured*, *landed*, *unprincipled* and the like. Still, it is not gainsaid that it were well to consider some such word as *clever* before using *talented* in such phrases as "a talented young writer," "a talented review." This much is sure, no harm can ever come from carefulness in the choice of words.

Talk and Speak

TALK and SPEAK. These are not synonymous words. A man may *speak* several languages and yet be unable to *talk* (sense) in any. An idiot may be able to *speak* — indeed, most idiots are; but they never *talk*, in the sense of putting words together intelligently.

Tea

TEA is *tea*, and nothing else. *Beef-tea*, meaning strong broth, is absolutely wrong.

Towardly TOWARDLY did good service in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the sense of *comely, wholesome, promising;* as, a *towardly* young woman.

Transmit TRANSMIT. *Send* is a simpler and better word.

Transpire TRANSPIRE is an interesting and pathetic example of long-suffering. Surely, its meaning has been grossly perverted. It does not mean *happen, elapse, occur* or *take place;* but simply, "to breathe through, and so to pass off insensibly." In French the word means *perspire.* Etymologically *transpire* and *perspire* are nearly perfect synonyms; but *transpire* in English has, by common consent, come to be "properly used only in a figurative sense to express the passage of knowledge from a limited circle to publicity."

TRUISM "is a self-evident truth; *a* truth, not merely the truth in the form of a true assertion of fact. Thus, The sun is bright, is not a *truism:* it is a self-evident fact, but not a self-evident truth." But a self-evident or universally admitted truth, such as, All who live must die, is a *truism.* **Truism**

ULTIMO, INSTANTE, and PROXIMO, usually written in abbreviation: *Ult.*, *Inst.*, and *Prox.*, do not become the pen of simple English writers. There is nothing elegant in their use. "It is much better to say, *last month*, *this month*, *next month*," except for the convenience of the contractions. In general usage, "*ultimo* and *proximo* are themselves contractions of *ultimo mense*, in the last month, and *proximo mense*, in the next month"; *ultimo* and *proximo* being the ablative cases of *ultimus* and *proximus*, meaning not the last and **Ult., Inst., Prox.**

the next, but *in* the last and *in* the next; *month* being necessarily understood to do away with possible confusion. "Instant is *instante mense*, the month now standing before us."

Utter

UTTER. Those who strain the meaning of words through lack of knowledge, or attempt at *conspicuous* gentility of speech, often use this word for *perfect*, *absolute*, *complete*, *entire*. In truth, *utter* is only another form of *outer*. "To utter is merely to put out, to put forth, or outside of the person uttering. Utter nonsense is that which is entirely outside the pale of reason. This outwardness is the essence of the word in all its legitimate uses, and in all its modifications." However, Mr. Chaucer is authority for using it in the sense of *absolute:*

"Full cunningly these lords two he grette,
And did his message, asking him anon

If that they were broken, or aught wo begon,
Or had need of lodesmen or vitaile,
For socoure they shoulde nothing feile,
For it was *utterly* the queenes will."

Legend of Good Women.

Ventilate

VENTILATE. A man may be said to air his opinions in public; but to say that he *ventilates* them is a strain upon good taste. Nothing is gained by using *ventilate* in the sense of *bring into discussion;* though this use of the word is not a neologism. At the time of Henry the Eighth this passage appeared in a state paper:

"Nor shall it ever be seen that the king's cause shall be *ventilated* or decided in any place out of his own realm."

Veracity

VERACITY "is merely an Anglicized Latin synonym of *truthfulness.* Truth *and* veracity is a weak pleonasm." *Truthfulness* is a much better word

than *veracity*, both of which apply to persons — *truth* applies to things. "We may doubt the truth of a story because we doubt the *veracity*, or, better, the *truthfulness*, of the teller."

Verbal, Oral

VERBAL, ORAL. These two words are frequently confounded by writers of good standing. For example, Mr. Trollope says, in *Barchester Towers*, "Without sending as much as a *verbal* message in answer to Mr. Slope's note." In Fielding's *Amelia* we read: "You will be pleased, madam, to remember, the lad was sent with a *verbal* message to the doctor." And Bulwer Lytton, in *What Will He Do with It?*: "By a private *verbal* arrangement, not even committed to writing." Now, *verbal* means "couched in words" which are of course either spoken or written. And *oral* means delivered by word of mouth. It is very plain that

one cannot be the synonym of the other. H. L. Bulwer, in his *Historical Characters*, illustrates the proper use of *verbally:* "In fact there are parts which are almost *verbally* repeated." Many other cases of the correct and incorrect use of these two words could be given. But brevity is meant to be a characteristic of this book.

VICINITY "is very often incorrectly and vulgarly used without the possessive pronoun necessary to define it and cause it to express a thing instead of a thought." Thus, Boston and vicinity, instead of Boston and *its* vicinity. This error is owing perhaps to the common frequency of such phrases as, This place and vicinity, meaning, This place and this vicinity, *this* being understood. **Vicinity**

VULGAR does not mean *immodest.* Once upon a time the word merely **Vulgar**

meant *common.* By degrees it naturally came to signify *low, rude, impolite.*

Well posted WELL POSTED. Say *informed* (upon a subject)—*knows it*—*understands it.*

Whither WHITHER signifies motion to. Unless one is pedantic or over-learned of Greek and Latin construction, which many of us are not, it is better to substitute *where* for *whither* in such cases as, "he has gone *whither* there is no marrying or giving in marriage."

Whole WHOLE, ENTIRE, COMPLETE, TOTAL should not be used indiscriminately, one for the other.

Whole implies that from which nothing has been taken;

Entire, that which has not been divided;

Complete, that which has all its parts;

Total, the aggregate of its parts.

WIDOW WOMAN. Surely, these words are coupled only through negligence of speech. The most ignorant person must know that a *widow* is a woman; and no one would think of saying, *female* lady or *she* cow. But *widow* is one of the most interesting of words. With hardly any change of form or meaning it has been traced by Max Müller and others back through thousands of years. Over ten centuries ago our Anglo-Saxon forebears used the word in England and North Germany. Centuries before that it was used by the Meso-Goths, and earlier by the Latin people — and a thousand years before that on the slopes of the Himalayas, as Sanscrit records show. "The word at its original formation meant simply a woman left without a man, just as it does to-day; and it has remained all these ages materially unchanged both in sound and meaning." **Widow Woman**

Widower "is a poor word, which should mean one who widows, not who is widowed." Still, its convenience counts for much — enough, at least, to have firmly fixed it in the common speech.

Witness WITNESS is from the Anglo-Saxon word *witan*, to know, "and means testimony from personal knowledge, and so the person who gives such testimony; and hence the verb *witness*, to be able to give testimony from personal knowledge." Acts are witnessed, therefore, not things. It is absurd to use the word as a synonym of *see*. And yet this error is supported by ancient usage in nothing less than Wycliffe's *Apology for the Lollards*.

VULGARISMS AND "WORDS-NO-WORDS"

II

VULGARISMS AND "WORDS-NO-WORDS"

MR. R. M. BACHE well says: "The employment of a foreign word in conversation, or in writing, is legitimate only when the writer has no equivalent in his own language."

"A word," says Mr. White, "is an utterance of the human voice which in any community expresses a thought or a thing."

"A *nice* man is a man of nasty ideas," said Dean Swift, and I may add, the Dean was a very *nice* man.

Foolish folk say *limbs* when they mean *legs*, and *stomach* when they mean *belly*, and *donkey* when they mean *ass*,

and *antmires* when they mean *pismires*. All of which is significant to those who use words scrupulously. Those who do not, might profit by a little care to the subject.

Ad. AD., as a generally understood abbreviation of *advertisement*, has in favor of its use a short-cut, commercial instinct — the gain of convenience. But to one who would speak English after an approved custom, such abbreviations are unsightly, and offensive to the ear.

Agriculturalist AGRICULTURALIST for *agriculturist* is like saying *chemicalist* for *chemist*.

Authoress, Poetess AUTHORESS, POETESS. These are not lovely words; and with others like them have been condemned by writers of good taste. But the termination *ess*, in English, to distinguish the female from the male, has been established, it would

seem, by very long and excellent usage. The chief objection to it probably is one of individual taste. For have we not *actress*, *sculptress*, *paintress?* And Milton said:

> "Thee *chauntress*, oft the woods among
> I woo, to hear thy even song."

Besides, there are *mistress*, *goddess*, *heiress*, *seamstress* and the like.

Banister

BANISTER is very commonly used instead of *balustrade* or *baluster;* especially is this true in rural districts.

Banting

BANTING. A person by the name of Banting prescribed a system of diet which was intended to reduce obesity. Many corpulent folk adopted the system, and, for short, called it *banting*. Now, an over-fat person may be excused for making Mr. Banting's name do the service of a grotesque participle.

I have never heard that Mr. Banting objected; and besides, when one is obese, the easiest way of getting on is the way most likely to be followed whether in the choice of words or other effort. However, any person of moderate fleshiness, and from that down to hungry leanness, should not be pardoned for using *banting* as a participle or *bant* as a verb.

Borrow BORROW. Among the more illiterate classes *borrow* is frequently used in a curious sense. For instance: "I *borrowed* this or that *to* her and never seen it ag'in," instead of "I *lent* it," etc.

Corporeal CORPOREAL (for corporal) is common, coarse and illiterate.

Despisable DESPISABLE (for despicable) is not used by the educated.

DISREMEMBER (for do not remember) is inelegant and obsolete. Disremembe

DONATE, ignorantly formed from *donation*, after the fashion of *vocate* from *vocation*, *orate* from *oration*, is almost idiotic. To *give*, *present*, *grant*, *confer*, *endow*, *bequeath* or *devise* — any one of these words — expresses all that *donate* possibly could. Nothing is added to a *gift* by calling it a *donation;* on the contrary, much falls away from the speaker of such abominable words. There is no better English than this: "The *Giver* of every good and perfect gift"; nor any stronger and simpler than Portia's, "Clerk, draw a deed of *gift.*" Donate

"And Sisera said unto Jael, *Give* me, I pray thee, a little water to drink."

DUE for OWING. "His success was *due* solely to his exertions," is incorrect; Due for Owing

the word *owing* should be used instead. For *due* implies debt, and does not mean *attributable.*

Electrocute ELECTROCUTE is a monstrosity that was cobbled together from the first part of *electric* and the last part of *execute.*

Enquire, Enclose, Endorse ENQUIRE, ENCLOSE, ENDORSE are better written this way than *inquire*, *inclose* and *indorse*, because they conform to "an important and inherent element in the formation of the English language." These words came to our tongue directly from the French *enquerre*, *enclos* and *endorser.* To trace them farther back to the Latin *inquiro*, *includo* and *in dorsum* is discouraged by the best lexicographers and philologists. Such words as *inquest* and *inquisition*, however, seem not to be governed by analogy. *Endorse*, used

in the sense of *approve, uphold*, is poor taste.

ENTHUSED is not only a monster, but a useless creature in company with such well-bred words as *stirred, aroused, inspired, excited, transported, ravished, intoxicated.* **Enthused**

&c. is a convenient sign standing for *et cetera* (*and the rest*), and "is properly used in schedules or statements after an account given of particular things, to include other things too unimportant and too numerous for particular mention." *&c.*, therefore, does not mean *and so forth, i.e.*, "and as before so after, in the same strain." *And so forth* "implies the continuation of a story in accordance with the beginning. Sometimes the story is actually continued in the relation, at other times it is not. Thus, we may say, **&c.**

And so forth he told him — thus and so; or, after the relation of the main part of the story we may add, *And so forth;* meaning that matters went on thereafter as before." Over six hundred years ago Gower, in his *Confessio Amantis*, correctly used this expression:

"So as he mighte [he] tolde tho [then]
Unto Ulixes all the cas,
How that Circes his moder was,
And so forth said him every dele
How that his moder grete him wele."

Extra EXTRA is a word very frequently heard in the streets, and pertains to a number of a newspaper containing unusual emotional, sensational and startling news. But in this sense it is a faulty usage of the word, as it bears no relation to the contents of the paper, but means rather a number beyond the ordinary and regular publication.

Fellowship

FELLOWSHIP cannot correctly be used as a verb. "Words ending in *ship* express a condition or state of those who are fellows, or fellow with each other."

Forward, Upward

FORWARD, UPWARD and several other compounds of the suffix *ward* (Anglo-Saxon *weard*, meaning in the direction of, over against) are often written *forwards* and so forth. But the *s* is considered by Mr. White and others not only superfluous, but a decided corruption, notwithstanding the ancient usage of writing the words both with and without it. Surely it is simpler to say *upward*, *forward*, *downward*, *toward* than to add the *s*, which is never done in *eastward* and *westward*.

Gent and Pants

GENT and PANTS, abominations! Dr. Holmes coupled them in this wise:

"The things named *pants*, in certain documents,
A word not made for gentlemen, but *gents*."

Good for Well

GOOD for WELL. "I can do it as *good* as you can," should be, I can do it as *well* as you can.

Gubernatorial

GUBERNATORIAL. As a rule, pedants and "small potatoes" use this word. The chief officer of a State is called governor — never *gubernator*. Then why should the governor's house be called the *gubernatorial* mansion? If a big word must be used, why not say, and correctly, *governmental* instead of *gubernatorial?*

Hydropathy, Osteopathy, Electropathy

HYDROPATHY, OSTEOPATHY, ELECTROPATHY. These words are meaningless examples of pretentious ignorance. Hahnemann made use of good technical Greek derivatives in coining *homœopathy, allopathy:* words in accordance with reason. But to call water-*cure* water-*disease*, bone-*cure* bone-*disease*, electric-*cure* electric-*disease*, is absurd

and misleading. Piddling apothecaries often make a similar mistake in employing the termination *ine*, which means having the quality of. As, for instance, some nostrum for cure of colds has been given the name of *coldine* (having the quality of a cold) because the namer ignorantly supposed he was coining a word quite as good, high-sounding and useful as *metalline*, *canine*, *glycerine*, *asinine* and the like.

Illy

ILLY. There is no such word in English.

Ize and Ist

IZE and IST "are Greek terminations, and cannot properly be added to Anglo-Saxon words. *Ist* is the substantive form, *ize* the verbal." Jeopard*ize* is one of the monsters made by adding *ize* to an English verb. *Jeopard* means to put in peril—and jeopard*ize* could mean no more. Experimental*ize* is

another word of the same class, which bears no analogy to *equalize*, *civilize*, *legalize*, *neutralize*, *humanize* and so forth. *Experiment* "is both noun and verb, and will serve all purposes not better served by *try* and *trial*." Then, too, *controversialist*, *conversationalist*, *agriculturalist* are very frequently, and certainly incorrectly, used instead of *controvertist*, *conversationist*, *agriculturist*. So, also, is the Anglo-Saxon *er* (sign of the doer of a thing) "incorrectly affixed to such words as *photograph* and *telegraph*"; the proper termination is *ist*: *photographist*, *telegraphist*, the same as *paragraph*—*paragraphist*. *Geographer* and *biographer* are exceptions firmly fixed in the language.

Learn and Teach

LEARN and TEACH. "*Learn* me how to do this," or "He *learned* me to do thus and so," are very common expres-

sions. These two words cannot be used indiscriminately one for the other. What is meant is, *Teach* me to do this, or He *taught* me thus and so.

LENGTHY. Objection has been made to this word as "illogical, at variance with analogy," needless and a poor substitute for the good old English word *longsome;* which is an eminently respectable member of the family to which belong *lonesome*, *wholesome*, *irksome*, *handsome* and *burdensome*. *Longsome* was used by the Elizabethan writers, and means all that *lengthy* could, *i.e.*, "so long as to be almost wearisome or tedious." **Lengthy**

OVERLY (for over), UNBEKNOWN (for unknown) are out of use. **Overly, Unbeknown**

PETROLEUM (from *petra* and *oleum*) means merely *rock-oil*, which is a better **Petroleum**

compound — and of the same class as *walnut*, *household*, *manhood*, *wheelwright*, *toward* and the like. So the speaker of pure English would do better to use *out-take* than the Latin compound *except* — better to say *wanhope* than *despair*, *truth-like* or *truth-seeming* than *vraisemblance*. But some learned gentlemen seem to think that pure English, so to speak, is out of date; at all events, it may be late in the day to urge these suggestions to any fruitful purpose.

Pocket-handkerchief

POCKET-HANDKERCHIEF. *Kerchief* was a cloth used to cover the head. A similar cloth meant for use in the hand might well be called *hand-kerchief;* but *pocket-handkerchief* is out of good taste and a superfluity that language might better be rid of.

Practitioner

PRACTITIONER is a vulgar intruder. *Practiser* is a good word and covers

the ground clearly and well. *Practitioner* has been defended on the grounds of analogy. For instance, from the noun *possession*, *possessioner* has been formed. And from *redemption* comes *redemptioner* — *probation*, *probationer*. It should be remembered, however, that there is no noun *practition* from which *practitioner* may be formed. The word is therefore abnormal and without sense or reason. And *possessioner* is not so good a word as *possessor*, even though its formation be quite as logical. But *practitioner* was formed most likely from the Old French *practicien* — an unworthy imitation. Brabantio said to Othello:

"I therefore apprehend and do attach thee,
For an abuser of the world, a *practiser*
Of arts inhibited and out of warrant."

Presidential

PRESIDENTIAL is not a legitimate word. It belongs to "adjectives which are

formed from substantives by the addition of *al*." The extra *i* is the undoing of the word, as much so as would be the case if it were thrust into such words as *incidental, oriental, regimental, experimental.*

"When the noun ends in *ce*, euphony and ease of utterance require the modification of the sound of *al* into that of *ial;* as *office, official; consequence, consequential; commerce, commercial.* . . . The proper form is *presidental*, unless *monumential* and *governmential* are correct. *Tangential* and *exponential* belong to the same class, and should be *tangental* and *exponental* along with *presidental.*"

Mr. White says the phrase, *presidential campaign*, is a "blatant Americanism." And he asks: "Is it not time that we had done with this nauseous talk about campaigns, and standard-bearers, and glorious victories, and all the bloated army-bumming bombast

which is so rife for the six months preceding an election?" There is no reason for calling an election or *canvass* a *campaign*. It is inexcusable even as a metaphor, and entirely out of keeping. "An election has no manner of likeness to a campaign or a battle. It is not even a contest in which the stronger and more dexterous party is the winner: it is a mere comparison, a counting, in which the bare fact that one party is the more numerous puts it in power, if it will only come up and be counted; to insure which, a certain time is spent by each party in belittling and reviling the candidates of its opponents, and in magnifying and lauding its own; and this is the *canvass*, at the likening of which to a campaign every honest soldier might reasonably take offense."

Preventative, Casuality

PREVENTATIVE, CASUALITY. The use of these words instead of *preventive*

and *casualty* marks the grade of the user's intelligence, which usually is not very high.

Proven PROVEN. "*Proved* is the past participle of the verb *to prove*, and should be used by all who wish to speak English."

Reliable RELIABLE, like Shakspere's *intrinsecate*, belongs to the class of words that are not words. It is a monstrous synonym of *trustworthy*. We may say of a man he is *trustworthy*, and his word may be *relied* upon. I will rest the case with this dogmatic assertion because the ablest philologists have determined the question after discussing it at great length.

Resurrect RESURRECT. This formation from *resurrection* is even worse than the formation of *donate* from *donation*, or *intercess* from *intercession*. *Resurrection* means

rising, not *raising*. We have heard of the *raising* of Lazarus; of God's *raising* the dead — and of the *resurrection* of Christ and the dead. But to use *resurrect* in the sense of *to raise*, *to unearth*, *to dig up*, *to recover*, is a very disgusting error.

Settle

To SETTLE is often used instead of *to pay*. For example: He *settled* for this or that — meaning he *paid* for something — which is almost as inexcusable and hideous as the use of *settle* without an object, as, "Hadn't you better *settle* with me?"

Shamefaced

SHAMEFACED is a corruption of *shamefast*, owing perhaps to the fact that *fast* was pronounced like *fac'd*, "which led to the supposition that *shamefast* was merely an irregular spelling of *shamefaced*." So the conventional phrase, "not worth a damn," is owing

to confusion of words pronounced alike. For, in earlier days, when the transposition of the *r* was common, water-cress was known by the Anglo-Saxons as *cerse* or *kerse;* and when one wished to say a thing was of little worth, one was wont to say it was "not worth a rush," or a "*kerse*":

> "Wisdom and wit now
> Is nought worth a *kerse.*"
> *Piers Ploughman's Vision.*

Thus, the phrase came to be, through misapprehension, "not worth a *curse*"; again "not worth a damn," and finally, "not worth a continental god damn." But "not worth a tinker's dam" had an entirely different derivation: In old times repairers of tinware, in the process of filling a hole in a pan or other utensil with solder, built a little dam of moistened meal around the aperture. This limited the flow of the melted

solder. As soon as the metal solidified, the dam was knocked off, and because it could never be used for any purpose again it became the symbol for absolute worthlessness. Hence, a tinker's dam came to mean "of no value."

Sis, Sissy

Sis, Sissy. Neither is an abbreviation of *sister*. *Cicely* (Cis and Cissy) appears all through our early literature, meaning any young girl.

Some

Some is widely misused for *somewhat;* as, "He is *some* better to-day."

Standpoint

Standpoint is not a good word; for unlike such words as *death-bed* (bed of death), *turning-point* (point of turning), *bread-knife* (knife for bread), *house-top* (top of house), its meaning cannot be expressed by reversing the elements of its compound and connecting them with the preposition *to*, *for*, *of*. *View-point* or *point of view* is the

correct and elegant expression, unless we would countenance such vulgar words as *wash-tub*, *cook-stove* and the like. Thus is *motorman*, a word coined by Mr. C. O. Mailloux, much better than *motoneer*. *Motor-man* is definite, precise and logical — that is to say, *the man at the motor*.

Teeth-ache TEETH-ACHE. Now and then a person not totally depraved and hopelessly ignorant will say *teeth-ache*, *white-teethed*, *teeth-brush* and so forth. But not often. Indeed, nothing could be more laughably and foolishly pedantic.

Telegram TELEGRAM is a word "both superfluous and incorrectly formed." *Telegraph* is not only a verb, but also a noun; and speakers of anything but slovenly English will say *telegraph* instead of *telegram*.

NOTE. "A *monograph* is an essay or an account having a single subject; a *monogram*, a character or cipher composed of several letters combined in one figure; an *epigraph* is an inscription, a citation, a motto; an *epigram*, a short poem on one subject"; properly applied to any bright, pithy saying, whether in verse or prose.

Tide

Tide was originally used in the sense of the *hour*, *occasion*, *season*, *opportunity:* we still have *Christmastide* and *Whitsuntide.* It naturally came to be applied to the ebb and flow of the sea, which takes place at certain definite seasons. So, "Time and tide wait for no man," means time and the *hour*, the *occasion* or the *opportunity* wait for no man.

"Time and the hour runs through the roughest day":

here, *hour* is merely a synonym of *tide.* Many illustrations showing this meaning of *tide* abound in English literature. In these two lines of an epitaph written in the fifteenth century, we have:

"Farewell, my friendis, the *tide* abideth no man;
I am departed fro this, and so shall ye."

Also in Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida:*

"The morrow came, and nighen gan the time of *mealtide.*"

EVERY-DAY ERRORS

EVERY-DAY ERRORS

III

EVERY-DAY ERRORS

A WORD AS TO THE DICTIONARY

THE average English dictionary holds about the same relation to our language that the courtesan bears to society. No thoughtful person would wholly condemn either. But it is clear that the dictionary, while serving certain useful purposes, has also accomplished no small degree of corruption in speech. The dictionary, English grammar and spelling-book are a little too orthodox—that is to say, stupid—for cultured folk. These books are no longer regarded as a sacred trinity for correct usage by persons who, at times, do a little thinking for themselves.

Mr. Richard Grant White has expressed himself freely and well concerning the English grammar; and Edward S. Sheldon, the distinguished Harvard professor, is reported to have said that a dictionary of a living language, such as English is, is necessarily incomplete, both as regards the words included and the meanings given. "It is the natural, careless, unconscious, colloquial speech which furnishes the philologist with his best material, because it is freest from intrusive artificial influences."

It seems to me that the usual dictionary-definition is like a "shotgun-prescription"—it covers too much to be either scientific or desirable. So, one might say that a dictionary of a living language, like a tailor's fashion-plate, does very well for a season; but unfortunately the season is far advanced before the dictionary is ready for use.

In the words of Dr. Johnson: "No dictionary of a living tongue ever can be perfect, since while it is hastening to publication, some words are budding, and some falling away; that a whole life cannot be spent upon syntax and etymology, and that a whole life would not be sufficient; that he whose design includes whatever language can express, must often speak of what he does not understand; that a writer will sometimes be hurried by eagerness to the end, and sometimes faint with weariness under a task which Scaliger compares to the labors of the anvil and the mine; that what is obvious is not always known, and what is known is not always present; that sudden fits of inadvertency will surprise vigilance, slight avocations will seduce attention, and casual eclipses of the mind will darken learning; and that a writer shall often in vain trace his memory at the moment

of need, for that which yesterday he knew with intuitive readiness, and which will come uncalled into his thoughts to-morrow."

Accord ACCORD. "He was *accorded* a fine reception" (for was *given*), is clearly wrong, since *accord* means *agree, suit, in harmony with;* it is often used instead of *grant.*

Agreeably disappointed AGREEABLY DISAPPOINTED, To be, is impossible. *Agreeably surprised* is what is meant.

All of them ALL OF THEM. In this phrase *of* corresponds to the Latin *e* or *ex.* It is proper to say, Take one (or more) of them, or, Take them all; but not, *Take all of them.*

As though AS THOUGH is faultily used sometimes instead of *As if.*

AT ALL should hardly be placed in this chapter, though it has been called "a needless expletive." *At all* serves a useful purpose of emphasis, and in certain usage is idiomatic and forceful. **At all**

BACK OF, for *behind*, may be questionable; but in some cases it seems to be a strong idiom. **Back of**

BID for *bade*. "He *bid* his servants come to him," is a misuse often met with. **Bid**

BOUND. We hear, I am *bound* to do thus and so. *Determined* is the proper word. **Bound**

BUT THAT and BUT WHAT used instead of *that* is certainly poor taste, to say nothing more. **But that and But what**

CRUSHED OUT for *crushed*. If a thing is *crushed* that ought to be enough, un- **Crushed out**

less one is shockingly vindictive, which Mr. Dryden says was true of Alexander:

> "Thrice he routed all his foes
> And thrice he slew the slain."

Dare DARE is often misused for *durst:* He *dare* not speak, for, He *durst* not.

"Who is he, and where is he, that *durst* presume in his heart to do so?" *Esther* vii. 5.

Deceiving DECEIVING is often erroneously used in the phrase, You are *deceiving* me. What is meant is, You are *trying* to deceive me; since nobody is ever deceived knowingly.

Different to DIFFERENT TO is a vulgar phrase meaning *different from.* It came into British speech since the Commonwealth and the Restoration, and now is often heard in America.

Differ from, Differ with DIFFER FROM, DIFFER WITH. A man differs *from* another when their opin-

ions diverge; but differs *with* when they conflict, as in a dispute or discussion. So, a difference *with* another means a dispute.

Distinguish and Discriminate

DISTINGUISH and DISCRIMINATE, in too many cases, are used one for the other, indiscriminately. *Distinguish* means to mark plain and obvious differences. *To discriminate* is to make minute and subtle shades of difference.

Equally as good

EQUALLY AS GOOD (for equally good) is tautological.

Equanimity of mind

EQUANIMITY OF MIND and *anxiety of mind. Equanimity* means evenness *of mind; anxiety* also expresses a *mental* condition. The *of mind* in each case, therefore, is superfluous.

Every once in a while

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE is one of the most absurd, illogical and meaningless

phrases in the English language. *Once in every little while* may be used, or, better: *Once in a little while*, or, better still: *Now and then.*

Excessively EXCESSIVELY is not a synonym of *exceedingly* or *very*. *Excessively* hot, *excessively* cold, and *excessively* good or bad, is an ignorant misuse of the word.

Extra fine EXTRA FINE is tautological.

My fellow-countryman MY FELLOW-COUNTRYMAN says no more than *My countryman*, and says it not so well.

Final completion FINAL COMPLETION is tautological, as a moment's reflection will show.

Folks FOLKS. The *s* is superfluous. *Folk* implies plural number.

Heartily wish HEARTILY WISH is nonsensical. One wishes or does not wish, or wishes more

strongly at one time than another, or for one thing more than another.

HE LOOKED WRETCHEDLY, SHE LOOKED BEAUTIFULLY, are mistakes often made by persons far from ignorant. "The error is the consequence of a confusion of *look*, in the sense of direct the eye, and *look* in the sense of, to seem, to appear." No one would think of saying, He seemed *wretchedly*, She seemed *beautifully*, The grass looks *greenly*, or, The sky looks *bluely*.

He looked wretchedly, She looked beautifully

"HE MARRIED HIS WIFE IN HONOLULU." Well, such a man is only fit to live on some far sea island. In the first place, a man doesn't *marry* a woman — the woman *marries* the man. Besides, there is, among other peculiar things of the married state, this one: while a woman is a man's wife she cannot become his wife again any more

"He married his wife in Honolulu"

than she can be born again — a miracle known only to orthodoxy.

"Hold up your head and die hard"

"HOLD UP YOUR HEAD AND DIE HARD" is correct — not "*die hardly*," as some would have it.

"I do not like to walk too far"

"I DO NOT LIKE TO WALK TOO FAR." Of course not! who does like to do *too* much of anything?

I feel bad

I FEEL BAD, is an expression in very common use, and concerning which there has been more or less discussion and consequent misunderstanding. To *feel bad* is to feel physically sick or morally depraved. To feel *badly* is to be conscious of imperfect or perverted sense of touch.

I had rather, You had better

I HAD RATHER, YOU HAD BETTER. Now, "*had* expresses perfected and past possession"; how "can it be used

to express future action"? *Had rather* should yield to *would rather*, and *had better* to *might better*, in most, but not in all cases. Indeed, *I had rather* is idiomatic and has been so for centuries; in some cases the substitution of *would* makes a flagrant error. So, the use of the present perfect and perfect infinitive, as: *If I had have done, I was ready to have gone*, is logically incorrect. *If I had done, I was ready to go*, is good English.

In any shape or form

IN ANY SHAPE OR FORM, is absurd and tautological; the words *shape* and *form* being identical in meaning.

In our midst

IN OUR MIDST means in our middle — a very incorrect and vulgar phrase. *Among us* is much better; indeed, correct.

Is being done

IS BEING DONE. Shakspere managed in some way to get along without this

use of *being*. Other writers and speakers of idiomatic English have done the same. But since the latter part of the seventeenth century there have always been those who seem to think *is being done*, *is being made* and so forth, indispensable to clear English. Bishop Jewel, of the Elizabethan period, wrote: "Some other there be that see and know that the Church of God is now *abuilding*, . . . " rather than, is now *being built*. And Shakspere, in *Henry the Eighth*, says:

". . . and when he thinks, good easy man,
His greatness is *a-ripening*."

Johnson wrote to Boswell, "My '*Lives*' are reprinting"; Hamlet says of Polonius that he is at supper, "not where he eats, but where he is eaten." Innumerable other examples might be given. The best authorities give as the correct form, *is a-doing*, instead of *is being*

done. In the phrase, The house is a-building, for instance, the *a* is merely a degraded form of *in*, as in *o'clock* the *o'* stands for *of the.*

NOTE. For thorough treatment of *Is being done* see *Words and Their Uses*, p. 334. And for another view of the same question see *Parts of Speech, Essays on English.*

Like I did

LIKE I DID is used by some folk for *As I did* — but the mistake is not generally made.

Likewise

LIKEWISE, for *also.* *Likewise* couples actions and states of being; *also*, things or qualities.

Make way

MAKE WAY means "to move more or less rapidly, to dispatch." But we sometimes read in the newspapers that "while a *lady* was walking *on* Broadway, a thief snatched her pocket-book and *made way* with it." Good sense (a more or less rare human attribute) ought to make it clear that what the

thief did was to make *away* with the plunder—*i.e.*, he ran off with it, and while doing so, most likely, *made way* as rapidly as he could. So, "He *made away* with himself," meaning he committed suicide, is a correct expression; and yet it is frequently perverted into "made way."

Mussulman MUSSULMAN is made plural by adding *s*, like *German*. Mussul*men* would indicate that it is a compound of *man*,—which it is not.

Myself and Yourself MYSELF and YOURSELF. The proper use of these words is for emphasis or distinction.

"Romeo, doff thy name, and for that name,
Which is no part of thee, take all *myself*."

Natural talent NATURAL TALENT is absurd. All talent is natural.

NEW BEGINNER cannot be applied to one who is beginning for the first time. The adjective *new* is redundant when used in connection with *beginner*, which of itself expresses perfectly the meaning to be conveyed. New beginner

NOT A PARTICLE is often used for *not at all*, or in colloquial speech, "not a bit." In no sense is *particle* metaphorical; on the contrary, it is material and mechanical in signification; meaning an exceedingly small part of matter and should not be used to express degree, as, for instance: "not a *particle* of pleasure" or pain. "Not a bit," on the other hand, is "a metaphor which the child invents and the man retains." Not a particle

OF THE NAME OF, or BY THE NAME OF, is at least a heavy, clumsy way of saying what may be fully and gracefully said with one word, *named*. Of the name of, By the name of

One another ONE ANOTHER should be used only when speaking of more than two; otherwise *each other* is the proper form.

On purpose ON PURPOSE. An early meaning of *on* was *because of;* almost the only survival of this sense is in *on purpose* and *on compulsion.* This use of *on* is still acceptable to good English idiom. All of us have heard, He did it *on purpose,* meaning *of design, with intent, of purpose.*

On the street ON THE STREET. There are few silly expressions oftener used maybe than this. We hear of persons being *on* the street and of things taking place *on* the street and even of houses standing *on* the street, when what is meant is, *in* the street. "We are *in* or *within* a limited surface, but *on* or *upon* one that is without visible boundaries. Thus, a man is in a field, but on a plain."

"I walked again up the street, which by this time had many clean-dressed people *in* it." Benjamin Franklin.

On to

On to, except in slang, is often used instead of *upon*. The dog jumped *on to* the bed, is not incorrect if it is meant that the dog, being on the bed, jumped without jumping off. But if it is meant to convey the idea that the dog jumped *up on* the bed, then the word *upon* should be used instead of *on to*. On the other hand, a very learned friend of mine thinks differently; he says: "*Onto* is just as good a preposition as *into*. Both imply *motion to*, with arrival. *On* and *in* carry the idea of position only. 'The dog jumped *onto* the bed' means to me that he was somewhere else and changed his position with a jump. The dog jumped *on* or *upon* the bed well describes his performance after he had gained his position."

People PEOPLE is often used for *persons*, where it should not be. For example, Many *people* do thus and so, for, Many *persons*. *People* properly relates to a body of *persons* regarded collectively—a State. But strict rigidity of meaning in the use of this word seems to be discouraged by many able writers.

Prominently identified PROMINENTLY IDENTIFIED is one of the most unreasonable and incongruous phrases uttered with any frequency. "Identity is sameness; prominence is standing out or apart from."

Quantity QUANTITY is incorrectly used for number: as, A *quantity* of horses, meaning a *number* of horses. *Quantity* may refer to a collection or mass, but not to individual objects.

Restive RESTIVE means inclined to rest, stubborn, obstinate, unwilling to go forward, and is from the Latin *restare* (to stand

back — to hang back). Still, it is often used instead of *restless*, which has an opposite meaning, *refusing to stand still.* These two words "are etymologically unrelated."

Right away

RIGHT AWAY, meaning immediately, though in common use among cultivated persons, is unjustifiable. *Straightway* should be used instead of *right away.*

Scarcely and Hardly

SCARCELY and HARDLY. *Scarcely* refers to quantity: There is *scarcely* enough to go round. *Hardly* pertains to degree: I shall *hardly* find the time to do it.

Seldom, or never

SELDOM, OR NEVER, for *seldom, if ever*, is a common mistake. The phrase, however, may be used correctly.

Somebody's else or somebody-else's

SOMEBODY'S ELSE or SOMEBODY-ELSE'S? If *somebody-else* is written in the compound, then *somebody-else's*

is the proper possessive, otherwise it should be *somebody's else.* Individual taste in the matter, however, seems to govern the usage, which is of no great importance, one way or the other, to correct English.

Spoonsful SPOONSFUL is correct if it is meant to say a certain number of spoons were full. But if *spoonful* is used as a unit, then *spoonfuls* is the proper word.

Table-board TABLE-BOARD. *Board* and *table*, in this sense, are synonymous. Therefore, *table-board* is equivalent to saying *table-table* or *board-board.*

The above THE ABOVE is better expressed by writing, *The foregoing.*

The exception proves the rule THE EXCEPTION PROVES THE RULE, is an idiotic saying passing current as truth, and like the brook goes on for-

ever. How a mere exception can prove a rule is beyond all reason to tell. An exceptional *thing* proves nothing of a general nature, while an exceptional *act may* indicate that the rule, or general order, is otherwise. The perversion of a word, and consequent confusion of thought, doubtless gave birth to the injudicious saying as commonly used. The expression is proper only in the sense that "the excepting proves the rule concerning those things which are not excepted." Professor Chubb cleverly suggests another reason for this perverted use of *prove.* He says:

"*Test* is an old meaning of *prove.* 'The exception *tests* the rule' makes better thought than the absurd interpretation commonly given the proverb." *English Words.*

The masses

THE MASSES. This expression is thought by some to be as vulgar as the object it describes. But common

consent and good usage have recognized it as correct English when applied to the people generally. Mr. Gladstone freely spoke of *the masses* as opposed to *the classes.*

Those sort

THOSE SORT. If so many of us were not in the habit of making this kind of mistake in our daily speech, it might seem almost out of place to call attention to it here. In this phrase, *those* relates to *sort.* "*Those sort* of men" is equally improper with *Those crowd* of boys, or *Those company* of soldiers.

To simply state, etc.

TO SIMPLY STATE, TO BOLDLY RESIST, TO SERIOUSLY INJURE, are thought to be errors of speech by many of our best writers on the subject, on the ground that the infinitive verb is indivisible and should not be split. Professor Brander Matthews seems to think that the division of the infinitive, so that one of its

essential parts is separated from the other, is not necessarily an error — though he carefully avoids it himself, I believe.

TRY is often misused for *make*, as: Let 's *try* the experiment. Try

TWO (GOOD) ONES. "In the whole basket of peaches there were not *two* good *ones*." *Two ones* hardly sounds right. The plural of *one* is not the best of taste, though it is freely used by such a well-known writer as "Mark Twain": ". . . are they better than the English words? No; they mean just what the English *ones* do." And Professor William Dwight Whitney uses the word: Two (good) ones

"We have now finished our compendious review of the individual processes—at least, the leading *ones*—of which is made up the growth of languages like ours."

Life and Growth of Language.

Thomas Carlyle, in *Heroes, Hero-Worship*, says too:

"They are the leaders of men, these great *ones*."

Very unique

VERY UNIQUE is an example of perversion not uncommon to every-day usage. The error originated perhaps from the application of *unique* to some beautiful or rare object, and hence ignorantly used to express beauty or rarity rather than the correct signification of *no other like it*. For that is what *unique* means: "the only one of its kind, whether good or bad, ugly or beautiful."

Whether or not

WHETHER OR NOT is in very common use, and sanctioned by many fine writers and talkers. But a little reflection will show that in many cases the *or not* is superfluous, and therefore should be omitted. For example: "There will be Divine service at this meeting-house

on next Wednesday evening *whether* (it rains) *or* (rains) *not.*" *Whether* is a contraction of *which of either.*

WRITTEN OVER THE SIGNATURE "is the very lunacy of literalism." We write under a certain date, whether the date is placed at the beginning or end of the letter. So, too, do we write *under* the signature, no matter where the signature is placed.

Written over the signature

SLANG

IV

SLANG

SLANGWHANGERS there are in literature as in the brush. And why should there not be? If man is but a trifling step from the amœba, surely all having veins are nearer kin than cousins.

Just as we find sometimes, in the language of the lettered, somewhat suggestive of the pale and impotent dandy with hair parted precisely in the middle; of spindle-leg and pigeon-breast, unable to protect himself from a gritty game-cock, so do we find quite as frequently, in the speech of the illit-

erate, a sturdy virility that makes one think of a well-planted fist, or of

> "Phrases such as camps may teach,
> Sabre-cuts of Saxon speech."

And thus is language enriched with idiom, and sweetened with humor. New blood enlivens the old, and the old becomes new. In the endless change we hope there is progress and trust there is fitness.

However, in slang as in other things, it might be said that the bad perishes and the good lives on, if it were generally true. Unfortunately it is not. Who does not know that the positively bad thrives on through centuries, while much that is good withers and dies?

Language serves man according to his needs. The cannibal gets on very well with *long-pig* and *short-pig*. The nature of a savage might be shockingly soured with the vocabulary of a Shak-

spere. And so, intellectual aristocracy, it seems to me, calls for the classics. Maybe the time will come when there shall be no intellectual aristocracy. That is at least a few hundred thousand years ahead. For it will take a long time for man to learn the very alphabet of his own procreation — how foul a thing it is for vice and ignorance to reproduce their kind — that Science must finally be the Savior of the Race. At that fair time there shall be no mistakes in language, or if there are, there will be no little fellows to write little books on the subject. But so long as the unlearned vastly outnumber the learned — as poor, common taste far exceeds good taste — so long will perverted words find a welcome, harmful as real. And just so long will ignorance breed carelessness, and carelessness confusion.

It is all well enough for the profes-

sional optimist to assure us that language will purify itself by its own inherent volition — its movement. But the professional optimist forgets that he is too often merely an academic grub; that he deceives himself while dreaming of wings; and that he delights (mainly himself) in descriptive stunts — telling of happy flowers and fairy fields that exist only in his vague reveries.

If thoughtful folk make no effort toward propriety of speech and rely on language to uplift and purify itself on the lips of the unthinking multitude, then the thoughtful folk, indirectly at least, become obstructionists tending to hinder and retard the growth of language by the negative fault of omission.

No doubt evolution will finally assert itself, and language become better in spite of its defilers and regardless of

its defenders. Yet, I think not wholly without reference to these. Who shall say — except he would be startling — that words better right themselves from misuse without the aid of broad culture and watchful care? And even though some words do survive perversion, is it any sane argument for leaving them to their fate? What reason is there for thinking the perverted meaning an improvement upon the original meaning? Maybe the primitive meaning, as is often the case, is the clearest and best. Has language profited, then, or has it lost?

Perhaps our elder brothers were undemocratic in building up their beautiful classics. Perhaps they were blameworthy in separating their literature from the spoken language of the populace. Maybe the strongest and best literary language is the nascent speech of the people at large. Maybe

the spirit of the times urges our writers to be popular at whatever cost. And maybe it is best for the writers of language, the molders and makers of words, to assume a tender and soulful regard for the ignorant and vulgar by adopting their unchaste speech. But is it best for the crystallization of language into literature that the crystal should be clouded and marred with the vulgarisms of the masses? Do we not know that the masses have ever been directed by the few; that the minority ever rules the intellectual world? The pioneers are not relatively numerous. And so, it may be that after all the same rule applies to the makers and guardians of language. And very likely not even Professor Brander Matthews has said the final word on the subject.

But all these questions I shall not try to answer. There are problems yet

to be worked out, and points yet to be determined. I will leave it all to the masters, and proceed briefly with Slang, some of which has been found of good and faithful service, and much of which has received the command, Get thee behind us.

So, while English may be called very properly a living language, it is after all in the slangy tongue that the processes of activity are most manifest. Slang, like a spring ever nascent, may yet be as old as the hills from which it flows. It is a perfectly respectable phenomenon. It has the gallant audacity of precedent. It is a fruit that ripens through the centuries to gladden the children of men; and like all fruit it is most wholesome when ripe. In this remote antiquity — in this kindergarten of the race — it serves its purpose well. But only do the more careless and the clumsier urchins mistake

its proper use. "Cock of the walk," "well-groomed," "toe the mark," "start in," "on bed-rock," "on the stocks," and so forth, may yet take on equal respectability with such good English phrases as, "to parry a thrust," "to cross swords" (in argument), "to lose track of a subject," "fair play," "foul play," "crestfallen," "to show the white feather," and so forth, which were slang expressions, merely, in an earlier day.

I have not tried to catalogue all the slang there is. The subject (ancient and modern) would require many volumes. But I have arranged in order some well-known slang words and phrases as an example. A few of them perhaps are no longer slang, but rather wholesome idioms. Many of them, however classified, remain good English and will do good service doubtless for years to come.

All right, all right!

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT! at first a senseless ejaculatory expression, was used after a time as a threat-intensive, and was often heard in remote country villages thus, "I'll 'tend to him all right, all right!" It is now pretty generally out of use, I believe.

Anyhow and Anyway

ANYHOW and ANYWAY were thought at one time to be exceedingly vulgar and slangy. Now, on the contrary, they are treated as idiomatic.

Bears and Bulls

BEARS and BULLS, if not born on 'Change, at least became fixed in the language through brokers and pass current wherever English is spoken.

Belly-aching

BELLY-ACHING, a verb.

Blizzard

BLIZZARD was born on the Western wind-kissed prairies and carries with it the spirit of mighty wind and cold and fine cutting snow.

Boom BOOM. Professor Matthews says *boom* came from the logging-camps of the Northwest.

Boss and Henchman BOSS and HENCHMAN. These two words properly go together; and if they were slang once, surely their long and good service entitles them to emancipation and enfranchisement as good citizens of language. *Henchman* is an old English word, the early meaning of which is now archaic. *Heeler* is a word of less respectability, and because it conveys no shade of meaning, perhaps, that *henchman* now lacks, it is less worthy to be lifted from the level of slang.

Brand-new BRAND-NEW, from *brank-new*, long obsolete.

"Then there was the farmer's ball, wi' the tight lads of yeomen with the *brank-new* blues and buckskins." *St. Ronan.*

BUNCO. To cheat, defraud. **Bunco**

CHEWING THE RAG is applied to the chatter of a disagreeable and over-talkative person prone to nag and quarrel and find fault. **Chewing the rag**

CINCH, while almost synonymous with *soft snap*, had a radically different origin. *Cinch* has come to take its place among words of recognized standing. Its widest use is entirely metaphorical; it originated in the Southwest among the tighteners of girths of pack-mules; and hence means to have a tight grasp of, a safe hold of, a sure thing. DEAD CINCH — *dead* here is merely an intensive, meaning unalterable, absolute, fixed. **Cinch**

CORNERS and MARGINS, with *bears* and *bulls*, belong to the vocabulary of speculation; and like *bulls* and *bears* have **Corners and Margins**

gone into general usage and been sanctioned by good writers.

Crank CRANK, I think, would hardly be called slang in these days of mental twists and independent thinking. Dr. O. W. Holmes gave the word good standing.

Cuts no ice CUTS NO ICE is a slangy way of indicating that a person or thing makes no sort of difference to one, is of immaterial consequence, unimportant, impotent and useless.

Cutting his eye-teeth CUTTING HIS EYE-TEETH, that is to say, having his wits sharpened, is an uncertain wandering phrase of pure slang, destined perhaps never to rise above its present level.

Dead level DEAD LEVEL, DEAD SHOT, DEAD SURE THING. *Dead* in these phrases merely intensifies their effect, as in the case of *dead cinch.*

DON'T MONKEY WITH THE BUZZ-SAW. *Monkey* and *buzz-saw* are strongly descriptive words. Nothing could be more terse. **Don't monkey with the buzz-saw**

DON'T YOU FORGET IT, usually spoken *Don't yer fergit it*, is impertinent and extremely low-bred. **Don't you forget it**

ELECTRICS. With the introduction and wide use of electric lights, *electrics* has been adopted for short and serves its purpose well enough. **Electrics**

FAD and even FAKE are too well established by tongue and press to be counted merely slang. A certain use of FLY, on the other hand, is purely colloquial. She's very *fly*, while expressive enough, is hardly fit for polite usage, and therefore not needed. **Fad, Fake, Fly**

FLASHED HIS ROLL means that he displayed his currency. **Flashed his roll**

Flip FLIP is applied to one who carries lack of seriousness, gay irresponsibility, to an unwarranted degree.

Get a move on you and Get a wiggle on GET A MOVE ON YOU and GET A WIGGLE ON are current slang phrases sufficiently expressive, surely.

Getting next GETTING NEXT means getting inside information and is of similar signification to the monstrosity, *On to it*, *i.e.*, knowing all about it, possessing the closest facts to the case. *Next* is the superlative of *near*, meaning nearest. The use of *getting next*, therefore, is not wholly illogical in a metaphorical sense.

Getting on the band-wagon GETTING ON THE BAND-WAGON is uncouth slang. It savors too much of the circus or the smoke and political soot of torch-light processions to be worth while.

GO 'WAY BACK AND SIT DOWN means that, as his usefulness is ended, the fitness of things demands that he withdraw himself from action and modestly merge his superfluous personality with the uninteresting background. **Go 'way back and sit down**

GRAFT is said to have originated in *argot.* Its early habitat was the slums. It meant the unlawful, secret profit levied for protection — a kind of petty blackmail. The word was widely used in connection with certain alleged dishonest acts of the New York Police Department. More recently *graft* has been given a broader significance and made to cover secret profit for contract and business. It is often used as a synonym of "rake-off." From the cook who demands five dollars a month from the family butcher, to the doctor who takes a percentage on the prescriptions he sends to the druggist, these **Graft**

filching moral wretches are colloquially known as *grafters.*

Grit and Sand

GRIT and SAND mean much the same as *pluck;* they are very nearly synonymous with *pluck*, though possibly they carry an extra shade of meaning.

Has a jag on

HAS A JAG ON is a homely way of using descriptive metaphor. A condition between sobriety and drunkenness suggests nothing so much as carrying a jag: a light load.

Hayseed

HAYSEED, REUBEN, JAYHAWKER, CLODHOPPER and so forth are impolite descriptive terms applied to rural cousins —those of a certain class. In some parts of the South *cracker* and *white trash* are used in much the same sense.

He's lost his taw

HE'S LOST HIS TAW is expressive and touching as applied to one mentally alienated.

He's on to his job

HE'S ON TO HIS JOB, *i.e.*, he knows his business, and possibly possesses diplomatic skill.

Hitting the grit

HITTING THE GRIT is a curious bit of slang and very expressive. One running in great fright or extreme earnestness is well described as *hitting the grit* —the ground.

Hold up

HOLDING UP A TRAVELER: a metaphorical way of saying that a brigand or highwayman stops a traveler with intent to rob. This expression seems destined to become idiomatic.

Hoodlum

HOODLUM.

"Out in San Francisco twenty-five years ago there was a notorious character named Muldoon, who was the leader of a gang of young ruffians. They were a terror to the community and about as tough a lot of citizens as you could find on the coast. A reporter who had

been assigned to a story in which they had figured, undertook to coin a word designating the gang. He reversed the name of the leader and referred to them as 'noodlums.' The compositor mistook the 'n' for an 'h,' and as *hoodlums* the word passed the proof-reader. And now 'hoodlum' is a recognized word, and will probably survive."

The Philadelphia Record.

Hot under the collar

HOT UNDER THE COLLAR is a low phrase indicating that some person has a high temper, is easily angered, and in the specific case needlessly so. But the saying has few characteristics of utility and none of long life.

Influence

INFLUENCE, pronounced *inflooence* by the illiterate, when made to serve a usage of vulgar political cant does not deserve to be called even *in*decent slang.

In the soup

IN THE SOUP followed the slang use of *fly*, maybe. At all events, however

remote or near the connection, we must admit that nothing could be more effectually "done for" than a fly in (hot, perhaps greasy) soup. The metaphor is striking, to say the least.

I WIN for I WON is a sporting phrase, but has a vogue among the more ignorant classes outside the gambling fraternity. **I win**

JAYBIRD is an epithet of mild ridicule or contempt, according to circumstances. **Jaybird**

JUMPED ON is a metaphor that will probably survive in certain quarters yet a while. *Jumped on with both feet* is of course the same idea expressed with greater intensity. **Jumped on**

KICKING — *a chronic kicker* — one always objecting. **Kicking**

"If Godfrey *kicked*, as he always did at the notion of making a fresh debt, . . . why, he wouldn't *kick* long." *George Eliot.*

Kicking the bucket

KICKING THE BUCKET is an ungraceful way of dying, or may be an unresisting method of "passing in one's chips." One thing to be said in favor of *kicking the bucket* and *passing in his chips* is the euphemism which robs death of its gruesomeness by clothing it with metaphor and grim humor.

Knocker

KNOCKER. One is called a *knocker* when he is forever assailing reputations. This use of the word is essentially slang, and up to this time has not shown much virility.

Lays low

LAYS LOW. *He lays low and saws wood* is one of the most peculiar and incongruous of slang phrases. A man who *saws wood* is one supposed to *get in his work* quietly and effectually.

LAYING PIPE is used in a political sense and is synonymous with *wire-pulling*. Both expressions have been in use long enough and have been serviceable enough to establish them in the English of America. *Log-rolling* and *machine* bear similar relationships. **Laying pipe**

MONKEY BUSINESS, while incongruous, is yet expressive and useful. **Monkey business**

MOSSBACK should hardly be classed as slang. Few words are better. **Mossback**

ON THE HIP. **On the hip**

"I'll have our Michael Cassio *on the hip*."
Shakspere.

This phrase ought to be good English idiom.

PAL suggests the criminal vocabulary, is unwholesome and not needed. **Pal**

PETERED OUT is partly dialect and partly slang. **Petered out**

Raft RAFT is used in slang to denote indiscriminate collection, number and quantity. "Oh, there were just *rafts* of insects on the pea-vines," or, "He had *rafts* of grain on hand." Its misuse may continue some time among the ignorant — but it will not be lasting.

Rapid, Swift RAPID, SWIFT, are applied to loose character.

Rolling-hitch ROLLING-HITCH is a term familiar to the logging-camp and has been used metaphorically and humorously thus: "The Devil has a *rolling-hitch* on all backsliding Baptists." There can be no great objection to the metaphorical or other use of the compound.

Rubber-neck RUBBER-NECK is a gaping person who turns his head this way and that.

Sky-pilot SKY-PILOT is an exquisite bit of slang. It is humorous, biting, witty. It is

applied always to gentlemen of the "cloth." It is indeed very descriptive, appropriate, funny. It is a good word and much better than *parson*, *preacher*, *minister*, *dominie*, *priest*. It will probably last as long as there is any need of the object it describes so ghastly well.

Dr. Cooper, my dear old friend, never hesitates to reprimand me for my faults. He objects to my comments on *sky-pilot* — not because they do any sort of violence to *his* views, but because he fears that they may hurt somebody else. This is what he says: "Your definition suits *me* to a gnat's bristle, but it would insult millions of better people than I." And so, in deference to the "*millions*" of Dr. Cooper's "*betters*," I will also give the Doctor's definition, which doubtless is more scholarly and diplomatic than mine:

"SKY-PILOT—This designation was hit upon by some godless wretch who had more wit

than reverence. Evidently it was done partly in a spirit of rollicking abandon, and partly in ironical resentment of the *usual* preacher's self-superiority. We must not encourage it."

Dr. Cooper's definition suggests a recantation of Voltaire.

Slate SLATE is political slang and belongs with *machine*, *boss* and *henchman*. It is very well fixed in language in this country and bids fair to remain so.

Slump SLUMP belongs with speculative slang — to the stock market. It is a recruit that seems to have passed muster.

Small potatoes and few in a hill SMALL POTATOES AND FEW IN A HILL tells the whole story. The chief objection to this phrase is perhaps its clumsiness.

Smart, Swagger, Swell SMART, SWAGGER and SWELL are words meaning about the same kind of foolishness. But as even nonsensical things need names, these words may not be

amiss — though it is said that now and then a real *smart* young man has been.

SOONER, a noun, has been in use for at least twenty-five years. It is often jocosely applied to more or less unscrupulous "hustlers." In the settling of towns on government lands, those who, by trickery and unfair methods, first get upon the ground and appropriate the best lots are known as *sooners*. The word, then, is a title of opprobrium. It was born, no doubt, on the frontier. **Sooner**

"'We shall be condemned as *sooners*.' . . .

"By the time the train had reached its destination he felt that to any future charge of being a '*sooner*' he had successfully established an alibi."

A Story of Oklahoma,
in the *Century Magazine.*

STRANDED. The metaphorical use of this word is perfectly justified. We **Stranded**

ought to have that much feeling for the "play-actors."

Sure

SURE. *Yes, certainly! Emphatically yes!* is said in this simple word. The use is not elegant, to be sure, and not likely to gain respectable ground.

Taking the stump

TAKING THE STUMP is an idiom, though originally it was slang. The saying is native to the frontier and has clustering round it many legends of our early days when the politics of the people was young.

Tanglefoot whisky

TANGLEFOOT WHISKY. This phrase is almost grotesque. Its descriptive effect, however, is clear and good.

There's blood on the moon

THERE'S BLOOD ON THE MOON, humorously said with reference to another, is tantamount to declaring him angry, almost or quite, to a violent degree. It

also implies that the angry one is not taken over-seriously; that his anger is fit subject for mild ridicule.

THE WHOLE PUSH (or *the whole thing*) is sufficiently descriptive on its face, but hardly worth while. **The whole push**

TO FREEZE TO, TO GET LOADED, TO GET SOLID WITH, TO GIVE HIMSELF AWAY, TO GO BACK ON, TO LAY OUT COLD, TO BE UP TO SNUFF, TO BET YOUR SWEET LIFE, WELL, I SHOULD SMILE, and WHAT TH' 'ELL, BILL? are all strong slang phrases, some of which rise to the dignity of idiom, and all of which are more or less useful in one way or another. **To freeze to**

Slang is largely, by its very nature, evanescent; but some of it does more than fleeting service. Now and again it creeps into idiom, and so into litera-

ture, occasionally enriching the language with color, or gracing it with a new figure, but most often merely giving rugged strength — a wholesome sturdiness. And it is neither to be despised nor over-much welcomed.

Note. Some interesting slang-synonyms of *good*, *beautiful* and *fine* are: *bang-up*, *rattling-good*, *first-rate*, *immense*, *stunning*, *corking*, *lovely*, *delightful*, *heavenly*, *glorious*, *superb*, *grand*, *gorgeous*. Among nonsense words, many have acquired a real legitimacy: *disgruntled*, *transmogrify*, *poppycock*, *flapdoodle*, *whangdoodle* and the like. The ignorant often say "brickle" for *brittle*. Occasionally one hears an intelligent person use "primp" for *prink*.

HOW WORD-MEANINGS CHANGE

V

HOW WORD-MEANINGS CHANGE

LANGUAGE is a fruit of the ages. Speech was not put into man's mouth as a ripe apple from the clouds. A miracle was not required. Words bear no indication of divine origin. They are very, very human. Language and speech were of lowly birth. Like human beings, that they serve so well, the nearer we approach their remote ancestry the less occasion will be found for congratulation. Of language it may be said that its first blossoms are lost even as the earliest flowers that blessed the dreary countenance of earth. From the first bud to the last blossom

are many winters of utter loss. Recurring springtides of speech furnish faint likenesses, at best, of words long withered and dead. We may trace their curious changes only for a little way.

So it would seem that words are singularly "various and human," and governed by such strange moods that one might almost think they seldom remain long exact. To-day they say this and to-morrow that. But there is, nevertheless, always slow method in their caprice, and the very trend of human society in their ways.

This chapter is less for practical use than passing illustration of changes in the meaning of some well-known words.

Words and Their Ways in English Speech, by Professors Greenough and Kittridge of Harvard University, was freely consulted, and, generally, used to advantage.

ADMIRATION. Original meaning: Feeling (*Hamlet*). **Admiration**

AFFECTION. Orig.: Feeling. **Affection**
Later: Zealous attachment.

AMAZE. Orig.: "Utter physical stupefaction, or loss of one's wits." **Amaze**
Later: To bewilder, greatly astonish.

ASSASSIN. Orig.: "Member of a fanatical sect in the East, who intoxicated themselves with *hashish* and committed murders for the glory of their divinity." **Assassin**
Later: A sly, treacherous murderer.

ASTONISH (L. *ex* and *tonare*, to thunder). Orig.: To thunder-strike. **Astonish**
Later: 1. To stun, as by a blow. 2. Metaphorically used to express the extreme effect of terror or wonder in paralyzing the faculties for the moment

—a man who was *astonished* was in a kind of trance. 3. Surprise, to excite wonder.

Auction AUCTION. Original meaning: "The act of increasing in any way."

Later meaning: A public sale in which the price is governed by bids.

Avenue AVENUE (Fr. *avenir*, arrive). Orig.: "An approach to a city or to some conspicuous part of it."

Later: A wide street bordered (usually) with trees; a thoroughfare or highway street.

Become BECOME. Orig.: Arrive.

Later: 1. To reach one condition or state from a previous one. 2. Befit; as, These things *become* a man.

Belfry BELFRY (O. Fr. *berfray*). Orig.: "A kind of tower."

Later meaning: That part of a tower which supports and shelters a bell.

BLUBBER. Original meaning: To cry hard, to weep and sob. (Poetic.) **Blubber**

Later: Oily fat of whale and other sea animals.

BOOR (Dutch, *boer*). Orig.: Farmer. **Boor**

Later: Has now practically supplanted *churl* — a rude person; but retains its original meaning when applied to the Dutch farmers of South Africa.

BOULÉVARD (Fr., from Ger. *Bollwerk*, bulwark). Orig.: "A street laid out on the site of an ancient fortification." **Boulevard**

Later: A broad avenue designed for pleasure.

BRINE. Orig.: Tears. (Poetic.) **Brine**

Later: Salt water.

By and by BY AND BY. Original meaning: Adverb of place, meaning side by side.

Later meaning: 1. Immediately.

"Meet me *by and by* at the citadel."
Iago.

2. Has now become almost a motto for procrastination.

Caitiff CAITIFF (O. Fr., meaning *captive*). Orig.: Poor creature: expressed either pity or contempt.

Later: Coward.

Can CAN (A. S. *cunnan*). Orig.: To know.

"And *can* you these tongues perfectly?"

Later: To be able physically or morally to do anything.

"They *conne* nought here shippes stere."
Gower.

Canopy CANOPY. Orig.: From *konopeion*, "a bed with curtains to keep off the

troublesome gnats." (Gr. *konops*, gnat.)

Later meaning:

"This most excellent *canopy*, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire."

Hamlet.

Catch

CATCH. Original meaning: To drive or chase away.

Later: To lay hold of.

Censure

CENSURE. Orig.: Opinion (*Hamlet*).

Chamberlain

CHAMBERLAIN. Orig.: The servant in charge of the chambers.

Later: Palace or ecclesiastical official, steward.

Chapman

CHAPMAN (obsolete). Orig.: Merchant. Both words were used in early English to express contempt "for a saucy or otherwise objectionable person."

Charm CHARM (Fr. *charme*). Original meaning: Song.

Later meaning: Bewitch, enchant, irresistibly attract.

Chaw CHAW. Orig.: Chew; metaphorically, to ruminate.

Later: [Colloquialism.]

Cheaters, Escheators CHEATERS, ESCHEATORS. Orig.: Officers "who looked out for lands that might revert to the king in default of heirs."

Later: Their dishonesty brought about a very different meaning to the word *cheat*, now in common use.

Churl CHURL (A. S. *ceorl*). Orig.: Serf, bumpkin.

Later: A rude person.

Circumstance CIRCUMSTANCE. Orig.: "Things that stand round one."

Later meaning: 1. Environment. 2. Used metaphorically.

CLENCH, CLINCH. Original meaning: The same. **Clench, Clinch**

Later: "We *clench* our fists, but *clinch* a bargain."

CLOWN. Orig.: A clod: gross and stupid; *clodpoll, blockhead.* **Clown**

Later: 1. A rustic. 2. A jester. Appeared late in the sixteenth century.

COMPANION, MATE, were used in a contemptuous sense at earlier times. [Rehabilitated.] **Companion, Mate**

CONCEIT. Orig.: Imagination (*Hamlet*). **Conceit**

CONFERENCE. Orig.: A "carrying together." **Conference**

Congress CONGRESS. Original meaning: A "walking together."

Cónjure, Conjúre CÓNJURE, CONJÚRE. Orig.: The same. Later: "To *cónjure* is to use charms or incantations; to *conjúre* is to call upon solemnly, as it were with an oath."

Constable CONSTABLE. Orig.: Stall-attendant. Later: 1. Highest military title under the kings of France. 2. Petty elective officer of a township.

Convention CONVENTION. Orig.: A "coming together."

Cottage COTTAGE. Orig.: A laborer's dwelling. Later: A summer residence.

Counterfeit COUNTERFEIT. Orig.: To imitate or copy.

Later meaning: To imitate the coin of a country. The word to-day suggests little else than a kind of felony.

COURT (L. *cohors*). Original meaning: 1. Cattle-yard. 2. The large enclosure surrounding the palace of a noble or king. 3. The folk who gathered there. **Court**

Later: The verb *to court* means to seek favor, as did the courtiers of old of the king.

CRACK. Orig.: "Loud noise"—"the *crack* of doom." (Poetic.) **Crack**

Later (verb, adj., noun): 1. To burst, split, crack. 2. (Colloq.) First-class; as, A *crack* shot. 3. A fissure.

CRAFTY. Orig.: Skilful, dexterous in handicraft (*craftsman*). **Crafty**

Later: Skilful in deceiving, wily.

CUNNING. Orig.: Knowing, skilful; as, A *cunning* workman. **Cunning**

Later meaning: 1. Shrewd, artful, tricky. 2. Quaint, innocent, amusing manners and moods; as, A *cunning* babe.

Curious CURIOUS (L., meaning *careful, caretaking*). Original meaning: Inquisitive.
Later: 1. Elaborately wrought; as, A *curious* tale. 2. Odd, peculiar.

Danger DANGER. Orig.: Mastership, control of, power over; as Portia to Antonio:

"You stand *within his danger*, do you not?"

Later: Likelihood to hurt, proximity to harm.

Demon DEMON. Orig.: Divinity.
Later: An evil spirit.

Disaster DISASTER. Orig.: A bad star.
Later: Calamity.

Disease DISEASE. Orig.: Discomfort.

Later meaning: Disordered, unhealthy condition.

DOTE. Original meaning: "To be stupid." **Dote**

Later: To lavish extravagant fondness upon.

DOUBT. Orig.: To doubt, to stand in awe of. **Doubt**

"He was a good man and *doubted* God."

ELECTRIC, ELECTRICITY (Gr. *elektron*). Orig.: "Pertaining to amber, owing to the fact that the phenomena of electricity were first observed in amber." Electricity, amberness. **Electric, Electricity**

Later: Pertaining to the science or mechanics of the force called *electricity*. *Electricity* is now used to designate a force.

ENTHUSIASM. Orig.: Gr. for inspiration, or "possession by divine spirit." **Enthusiasm**

Later meaning: 1. Fanaticism (eighteenth century). 2. Intense, rapturous feeling; ardent zeal.

Erring ERRING. Original meaning: Wandering (*knight errant*).

Later used in a moral sense.

Execute EXECUTE. Orig.: "Carry out, follow out, or fulfil. The judgment of the court is *executed*, that is, carried out, when a murderer is hanged."

Later: Has been wrongly used for a long time to mean the "putting to death by legal process."

Fact FACT. Orig.: "A crime."

Later: Anything actually existent.

Fast FAST. Orig.: Fixed, firm.

Later (adj., adv.): 1. Original meaning retained. 2. *Fastē* (adv.), vigor-

ously, extremely—"a *fast* life," "a *fast* man."

FELLOW (A. S. *fēolaga*, from O. N. *fēlage*). Original meaning: Partner, one who *laid* down his property along with yours. **Fellow**

Later meaning: 1. Companion. 2. Idle companion. 3. Colloquially used for *man.*

NOTE. Combinations of *fellow*, such as *fellowship*, have preserved the literal meaning. But *Fellow* of a college comes from *socius*.

FIASCO. Orig.: "A theatrical failure." **Fiasco**

Later: Any humiliating or complete failure.

FOND. Orig.: Foolish. **Fond**

Later (noun, adj.): 1. "Foolish or doting affection." 2. Disposed to love or tenderly regard, devotedly attached to.

Fret FRET. Original meaning: "To eat away or devour."

Later meaning: To worry, annoy; to ripple; part of a guitar.

Fry FRY. Orig.: Applied by Spenser to the torments of the damned. (Poetic.)

Later: To cook with oily immersion in an open pan.

Ghost GHOST. Orig.: "Spirit in general."

Later: "A disembodied spirit appearing to mortal eyes."

Goods GOODS. Orig.: "Good things."

Later: Wares, merchandise, portable personal property.

Hint HINT (from *hent*, to take). Orig.: An occasion or opportunity.

"Upon this *hint* [occasion] I spake."

Othello.

Later meaning: A slight intentional suggestion.

HUSSY. Original meaning: Housewife. **Hussy**

Later: A pert or forward girl — a jade — used reproachfully or playfully.

"If the *hussy* stood up for judgment before us five," and so forth.

Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter.*

ILLICIT. Orig.: Unallowed. **Illicit**

Later: Unlawful.

INJURY. Orig.: Injustice. **Injury**

Later: Any kind of harm or damage.

INSULT. Orig.: "To jump at or upon." **Insult**

Later: "To treat with gross indignity, insolence or contempt."

KNAVE (Ger. *Knabe*). Orig.: Boy. **Knave**

Later: 1. Servant. 2. Term of dis-

paragement for inferior. 3. One morally worthless.

Lewd LEWD. Original meaning: Belonging to the laity.

Later meaning: 1. Ignorant. 2. Low. 3. Lascivious.

Lust LUST. Orig.: Pleasure.

Later: Strong desire; inordinate or unlawful sexual impulse.

Marshal MARSHAL (Teutonic by way of French). Orig.: Horse-boy.

Later: 1. To drill or review; to arrange. 2. To command. 3. A military officer.

Meat MEAT. Orig.: "Food of any kind — a sense still preserved in *sweetmeat.*"

Later: The flesh of animals used for food.

METTLE. Original meaning: Phonetic spelling of *metal.* **Mettle**

Later meaning: 1. "One's composition, nature." 2. Alert dignity, prowess; in a colloquial sense, as: It put him on his *mettle.*

MONEY, from Moneta (Juno), the Roman temple in which *money* was coined. **Money**

MYTH. Orig.: Story. **Myth**

Later: A Santa Claus tale.

NAUGHTY (from *naught*). Orig.: Destitute or good for nothing. **Naughty**

Later: 1. Bad. "*King Lear's* fool says, 'This is a *naughty* night to swim in.'" "The records of Plymouth Colony speak of 'small and *naughty* canoes.'"

"One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket

had very *naughty* figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad." *Jeremiah* xxiv. 2.

"The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own *naughtiness*." *Proverbs.*

2. Wicked: "*naughty* lady" (Shakspere).

3. Now applied to "the peccadillos of children."

Nice NICE (from the Latin *nescius*, through the French). Original meaning: Foolish; "this is the regular use in Chaucer."

Later meaning: 1. "Foolishly particular about trifles — 'more *nice* than wise.'" 2. "Trivial, as applied to objects." 3. "Particular about small things, accurate — a *nice* observer, *nice* distinction, *nice* discrimination." 4. (Colloq.) Excellent, good of its kind.

No. Original meaning: "An old word for *never*, being the adverb ā, 'ever,' with the negative *ne* prefixed." No

Later meaning: Strong negative softened in polite speech; as, *hardly*, *scarcely*, *I think not.*

Not (abbreviation of *naught*, nothing). Orig.: Not a bit, not a whit. Not

Later: In no manner, and so forth.

Officious. Orig.: Dutiful or serviceable. Officious

Later: "Too forward in offering one's services."

Pain. Orig.: Punishment. Pain

Later: Any acute bodily or mental suffering.

Painful. Orig.: Painstaking, laborious; as, "A *painful* preacher." Painful

Later: Productive of pain.

Pecuniary PECUNIARY (L. *pecus*, cattle). Wealth is estimated by primitive people in cattle rather than in coin. As conditions changed, with the more civilized peoples, *pecuniary* came to its present meaning.

Pencil PENCIL (L. *penicillus*). Original meaning: Fine brush (painter's) made of hair.

Later meaning: 1. "Marking instrument made of lead"; hence *lead-pencil.* 2. "Stick of graphite enclosed in wood."

Picture PICTURE. Orig.: Painting.

Later: Now used in the widest sense.

Pioneer PIONEER (Fr. *pionnier*, from *pion*, pawn). Orig.: "Soldiers who cleared the way for an army by felling trees, building roads, and doing all manner of hard and disagreeable work."

Later: 1. Used metaphorically. 2.

Used in literal sense "and is employed to make new metaphors, as in '*pioneers* of scientific discovery.'"

PIRATE (Gr.). Original meaning: "One who tries" or "makes an attempt," "one who goes on an enterprise," "an adventurer," and later, a sea-robber. **Pirate**

Later meaning: Always sea-robber in Latin and English.

PITIFUL. Orig.: Compassionate. **Pitiful**

Later: 1. Contemptible. 2. Capable of exciting pity.

PLACE (L. *platea*). Orig.: "From the Greek word for broad, and signified a wide street or square in a city." **Place**

Later: Locality, or situation in the abstract.

PLAUSIBLE (L. *plaudo*, to clap the hands). Orig.: Praiseworthy. **Plausible**

Later meaning: 1. Pleasing. 2. Seemingly true, but open to doubt.

Play PLAY (A. S. *plega*). Original meaning: Motion; still preserved in technical language: "the *play* of the valve."

Later: 1. Sport or game. 2. *Playing* a game (gambling). 3. *Playing* (making music). 4. *Playing* (acting).

Practice PRACTICE. Orig.: "A plot."

Later: 1. Apply habitually. 2. Perform repeatedly. 3. Pursue regularly.

rime of life PRIME OF LIFE. Orig.: The springtime of life.

Later: Vigorous middle-life.

Primrose PRIMROSE (O. Fr. *primerole*). Orig.: "It comes in the *prime* or spring of the year."

Later: Flowering plant (*Prima vulgaris*).

QUAINT (Fr. *cointe*). Original meaning: Cultivated, agreeable. **Quaint**

Later meaning: 1. Wise or skilful. 2. Elaborate. 3. Fanciful, odd or peculiar. 4. Old-fashioned.

QUEAN (A.S. *cwene*). Orig.: Woman. **Quean**

Later: Queen.

RAKE (from *rakel*, reckless), verb. Orig.: Wander. **Rake**

Later (noun): One who lives dissolutely, a debauchee.

RASCAL (O. Fr. *rascaille*). Orig.: The rabble. **Rascal**

Later: 1. One who is unprincipled or contemptible, a trickster. 2. (Hunting) A lean deer.

RASH. Orig.: Quick, active. **Rash**

Later: Without due caution, hasty, reckless.

Reckless RECKLESS. Original meaning: Careless. Later meaning: Extremely careless.

Religious RELIGIOUS. Orig.: Superstitious. Later: Devout.

Revel REVEL. Orig.: Joy, festivity. Later: 1. Unbounded pleasure, keen delight. 2. Excessive indulgence — to loose the passions.

Sanctimonious SANCTIMONIOUS. Orig.: Devout, holy or sacred. Later: It now implies hypocrisy.

Scales SCALES (L. *scala*). Orig.: A ladder. Later: 1. A musical measurement. 2. Weighing instrument. 3. Thin horny layers.

Scene SCENE. Orig.: A tent. Later: 1. "The booth in front of which the actors played." 2. "A per-

manent structure in the Greek theatre, forming the background of the stage or orchestra." 3. Anything open to view at a glance.

SEIZE. Original meaning: "To set, or put in possession of." **Seize**

Later meaning: To catch, to grasp forcibly and suddenly.

SENATE (L. *senex*, old man, from *senatus*). Orig.: A council of old men. **Senate**

SENESCHAL (Teutonic by way of French). Orig.: Old servant. **Seneschal**

Later: 1. Official in household of prince or noble. 2. Steward. 3. Royal magistrate or high military commander.

SILLY (A. S. *saelig*). Orig.: Blessed or good. **Silly**

Later: "Destitute of ordinary good sense," foolish, weak.

Simple SIMPLE was once used in a very different sense from that in which it is used at present.

"A foolish woman is clamorous: she is *simple*, and knoweth nothing." *Proverbs.*

Again:

"The *simple* inherit folly." *Proverbs.*

Sly SLY. Original meaning: Wise or skilful.

Later meaning: 1. Artfully dexterous in doing things secretly. 2. Crafty, with inclination toward meanness.

Soon SOON. Orig.: A. S. for immediately.

Later: Indefinite future time not far distant.

Spill SPILL. Orig.: Destroy.

Later: To let run out through accident or wastefulness or other intent.

"O let the blood by murder *spilt*
Wash out thy stricken children's guilt."
Holmes.

SPOUT. "Her eyes became two *spouts*" (Shakspere, in *Winter's Tale*). **Spout**

Later meaning: 1. Liquid ejected under pressure. 2. Eaves-pipe. 3. (Colloq.) Grandiloquent speech; as, He *spouted* nonsense by the hour.

STARVE. Orig.: To die. **Starve**

> "Christ *starved* upon the cross."
>
> Chaucer.

STICK. Orig.: Piece. **Stick**

Later (noun, verb): 1. A slim piece of wood. 2. To pierce or thrust.

STOMACH. Orig.: Courage (*Hamlet*). **Stomach**

STYLE. Orig.: A pointed instrument for writing or engraving. **Style**

Later: 1. The form of expression, composition, structure of a discourse; the handling of words in writing. 2.

Applied to wearing apparel and custom; as, His coat is out of *style;* she wears her hair in such and such a *style.*

Suggestion SUGGESTION (Elizabethan Eng.). Original meaning: "*Evil* suggestion, temptation."

Later meaning: Intimation, the imparting of a notion in an indirect, unobtrusive manner.

Surprise SURPRISE. Orig.: "To seize upon, to capture."

Later: Suddenly to astonish.

Take TAKE. Orig.: Bewitch.

"No fairy *takes,* nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time."
Hamlet.

"Daffodils that . . . *take* the winds of March with beauty." *Winter's Tale.*

Later: 1. "A *taking* person," a *tak-*

ing manner. 2. (Colloq.) *Fetching* substituted for *taking;* as, "A very *fetching* costume." 3. Assuming possession of.

THROW (A. S. *thráwan*). Original meaning: To turn, to twist. **Throw**

Later meaning: Displaced *cast.*

TOUCHY (from *techy*, peevish). Orig.: Faulty, vicious. **Touchy**

Later: Bad-tempered, easily irritated.

TRIBULATION (L. *tribulatio*). Orig.: "The rubbing out of corn by a sledge." **Tribulation**

Later: Metaphorically we say that it is by sorrow and affliction (tribulation) that our true selves are separated from our grosser natures—the corn from the chaff. Hence the modern meaning of the word.

TWEEZERS. Orig.: "Implements carried in a *tweeze* or case." **Tweezers**

Later meaning: Pincers.

Tyrant TYRANT. Original meaning: "Simply king, absolute ruler."

Later: "A cruel or irresponsible monarch."

Undertaker UNDERTAKER. Orig.: "One who *undertakes* to do a particular job, a contractor."

Later: Funeral director.

Unsophisticated UNSOPHISTICATED. Orig.: Unadulterated, unspoiled.

Later: 1. Genuine, pure. 2. Inexperienced, "green," gullible.

Valet VALET, VARLET (O. Fr. diminutives of *vassal*). Orig.: Boy or youth.

Later: 1. Servant. 2. (Varlet) Saucy person.

Vassal VASSAL. Orig.: Man—his lord's inferior.

VASSALAGE. Original meaning: Servitude. Vassalage

Later meaning: 1. Valorous deeds. 2. Splendid service in war of a *vassal* for his suzerain—the sense in which Chaucer uses it.

VICE. Orig.: Flaw, defect. Vice

Later: Habitual transgression of moral laws.

VILE. Orig.: Cheap. Vile

Later: Morally base, loathsome, depraved, disgusting.

VILLA[1] (L.). Orig.: "Farm-house with its accompaniments." Villa

Later: A pretentious country-seat.

VILLAIN (Fr. *vilain*). Orig.: Farm laborer. Villain

Later: 1. Replaced *churl*. 2. Term

[1] *Ville* is Norse. (Chubb.)

of contempt. 3. Low fellow. 4. Extreme moral reprobate.

Wanton WANTON (A. S. *wan-towen*). Original meaning: "Not well brought-up, untrained, and was applied (as noun or adj.) to a 'spoiled child.'"

Later meaning: 1. Playful, innocently sportive; as, "*wanton* lambs." 2. Perverse, without motive; as, "*wanton* mischief," "*wanton* malice"; ". . . made *wanton* the night" (Shakspere).

Wedlock WEDLOCK (A. S. *wedlāc*). Orig.: Pledge.

Later: State of being married.

Wench WENCH (A. S. *wencel*, *wencle*, from *wencel*, weak, needing protection). Orig.: Daughter, orphan or pupil.

Later: Term of reproach, colloquially applied to negresses.

WHITE-LIVERED. Original meaning: Cowardly. White-livered

Later meaning: Base in disposition, envious; pale or sallow in appearance.

WRETCH (A. S. *wrecca*, outcast, from *wrecan*, to banish, to drive out or punish). Orig.: With reference to exile. Wretch

Later: 1. A term used to express various degrees of feeling from irony to sympathy and tenderness; as, "the poor *wretch*."

"Where is that little *wretch*? I die in peace to leave him to your care."

Southern, in *Isabella*.

2. A term of opprobrium; a base, mean person.

"A *wretch* that had been a thief and a murderer." De Foe, in *Captain Singleton*.

YES (A. S. *gese* or *gise*). Orig.: Strong Yes

affirmative, equivalent to "just so," "exactly so," "yes, indeed."

Later: Commonplace, almost weak, affirmative.

NOTE. Professors Whitney and Chubb illustrate new meanings given to old words, using the word *head* for example.

1. The forward extremity of an animal.
2. The understanding, mental skill: He has a good *head* for this or that.
3. A unit or person: So much a *head*—A certain tax rate per *head*.
4. Chief or leader, executive officer, host. The foremost place: "the very *head* and front of my offending" (Shakspere). *Head* of an army or company, *head* of the house or table.
5. Something "resembling the human head in position or otherwise"—*head* of cabbage, of a pin, of a ship, bed, river; the *head* on a glass of beer. *Head* of water (height).
6. Occurrence reached by climax: The conspiracy came to a *head*.
7. Heading divided into *heads* (a discourse).
8. *Head*way, make *head*, *head* and ears, *head* and shoulders, *head* turned: idioms.

SOME OLD ACQUAINTANCES THAT WILL NOT LET US FORGET OUR WIDE KINSHIP

Words and Phrases applied Metaphorically and Descriptively to Persons and Things. (*Vide* "*Words and Their Ways in English Speech.*")

Blind as a bat. Sly as a fox. Cross as a bear. Bold as a lion. Stubborn as a mule. Gay as a lark. Dumb as an oyster. Busy as a bee. Hungry as a wolf. Gray as a badger. Work like a beaver. Drink like a fish. Chatter like a magpie. Fox. Pig. Bear. Vixen. Sheep. Monkey. Duck. Drone. Goose. Viper. Cat. Parrot. Mole.

Skunk. Serpent. Wolf. Bookworm. Dog. Vermin. Parasite. Bulls, bears and lambs. Stool-pigeon. Loon. Ape. Gawk. A bee-line. Bird's-eye view. Wild-goose chase. Calf love. A bee in his bonnet. Wildcat financiering. Deaf as an adder. Crocodile tears. The lion's share.

HOW PLACES, PERSONS AND THINGS LIVE IN OUR VOCABULARY

An Ingersoll, a Demosthenes, a Burke, a Poe, a Beecher, a Napoleon, a Nero, a Hector, a Mentor, a Nestor, a Solon, a Shylock, a Judas, a Benedict, a Joseph, a Job, a Samson, a Solomon, a Methuselah, an Ishmael, a doubting Thomas, a Good Samaritan, a Dives, to raise Cain, a Nimrod, a Rip Van Winkle, a palace (Palatine Hill), a Magdalen, Maudlin, Chimera, Tawdry, Pander,

Tantalize (Tantalus), Tartar (Tatar), Macadamizing (Macadam), a Goth, a Vandal, Ogre, Gypsy, Bohemian, street *Arab*, *Roman* firmness, *Punic* faith, Castles in the air, Utopian, Atlantis, Quixotic, Pickwickian, Magic (Magi), Epicurean, Platonic (love), Mosaic, Stentorian, a Mackintosh, Broughams, Victorias, Shrapnel, Phaeton, Sandwich, Java (coffee), Sauterne (wine), China (ware), Cashmere (goods), Landau, Surrey, Champagne, Sherry (Sherris, from Xeres, in Spain), Damask, Cinchona, Ampère, Hermetically sealed, Ohm, Volt, Magnet, Bedlam.

APPENDIX

It is too often assumed that distinctions correspond to words, and that when an array of words has been defined, they will be justified by facts in the real world. But language has had so long and so loose a development that the mere presence of words is no evidence of the reality of the distinctions they represent. Usage also gives so broad a meaning to many words that they lap over each other in every conceivable way. . . . We can be sure of nothing if usage and custom alone are relied on. . . . The size of dictionaries is partly responsible for loose thinking.

SIMON N. PATTEN,
Heredity and Social Progress.

APPENDIX

INTRODUCTORY COMMENT

THE first edition of *The Worth of Words* called forth many criticisms; there was also no end of enquiry, together with much kindly suggestion. Some of the criticisms were well founded; many of the enquiries were pertinent; and not a few of the suggestions were worthy. On the other hand, there were foolish attacks under the guise of criticism made by those who, whatever their fitness might have been for the pleasant duties of a swineherd, plainly were not qualified by education or judgment either for criticism or so-called creative work. I feel sure that no one expects a writer to pay any serious attention to the sour regurgitations of blatant ignorance.

However, in the case of worthy criticism, germane enquiry and valuable suggestion, the conditions require another course of action; no writer can afford to ignore these. Quite to the contrary, the conscientious student, even though he has the misfortune to write

books, will always be grateful for help and free to give open credit to his helpers. It is with this spirit at heart that the revision of *The Worth of Words* is undertaken.

AS TO REVIEWERS

Evidently the intent of this book has been misunderstood by a number of well-meaning reviewers. Briefly, its purposes were: To awaken interest in correct English speech; to point out common errors; to suggest the employment of good words in the place of poor words; to protest against linguistic slovenliness, and to declare in favor of simplicity and logic in the use of words. But not as an extremist—not as an original investigator in philology—not as a dogmatist nor yet as a "purist"—not as a prophet to the lettered, but rather as a plain person speaking to plain people.

Now, it may surprise several gentlemanly jaybirds who split their infinitives last year in calling me a dogmatist to know that in truth I am no such thing. I do not hope to say the final word on any subject, however trifling the thing may seem. Nor can I conceive that intellectual modesty permits one to go much further than to express an opinion and give reasons for holding to this belief or that.

An odd "criticism" of *The Worth of Words* is that it contains nothing new—nothing that cannot be found scattered here and there through scores of other books. And yet on page xxiv of the foreword I say: *My sole purpose is accomplished if I have put into ready form some helpful gleanings from worthy authorities on the true worth of words.* Surely, that should be plain enough and modest enough for all!

The fact is that only a relatively small number of reviewers ever read the books they "review." In many cases it is impossible to do so, no matter how scrupulous the scribe may be. But, in such cases, it seems to me that the "reviewer" should have conscience enough and common decency enough to refrain from adverse criticism of a subject which he has not examined critically.

As to the originality of this book, it may be said, perhaps, with some justice, that it is as original as a work of its kind could well be. For not even great investigators in philology invent the material of their research. That material is a product of evolution—a growth of the ages. Its growth may be studied and its laws of growth and devolution determined. Its structure and functions may be examined, and deductions from these duly formulated and presented according to the student's point of view—but that is about all.

ASSES

Again, there are ridiculous *poseurs*—stately asses who assume the airs of superiority and think thus to establish for themselves a position of undoubted authority. But these intellectual scrubs seem to forget that they are always distinguishable by ear-marks which no amount of vanity may hide; and, moreover, that a bray is seldom mistaken for the voice of wisdom. For these and such other bawlers of donkey-English who declare that *The Worth of Words* is not for them; that it is too elementary and superficial; I have no word of reproach. I recognize that everybody does as he must, though I must admit a certain amount of amusement at the incongruous capers of those whose misfortune it is to know no better.

FINALLY,

It should be perfectly clear to the intelligent readers of this book that its scope and purpose prohibit anything like a full treatment of the legitimate changes in meaning of the words handled. Furthermore, that no attempt has been made to cite all the mistakes in the use of them, or the many perversions to which they are subjected. Really, little

more can be done here than to point out the most flagrant of common errors, and to add here and there the spice of personal comment, be it good or bad.

Agreeably disappointed

AGREEABLY DISAPPOINTED (page 168). I am asked to reconsider this. *Disappoint* comes from (O. F.) *desapointer* (*des* = L. *dis*), meaning to frustrate what was appointed, fixed, determined, desired or expected to be, as "such *disappointment* of expectation," and the like.

Gradually and legitimately, *disappoint* has come to mean, to defeat the hope or desire of some attainment. To be defeated or frustrated in hope or purpose could hardly be said to be *agreeable*. I maintain, therefore, that the common phrase "agreeably disappointed" is incorrect. But granting that it is not absolutely incorrect, yet good taste would suggest the word *surprised* to be used in the place of *disappointed* in such cases.

Boycotting

BOYCOTTING. The precise date of adoption into English of many words is unknown. But there is a class, to which *boycotting* and *mob* belong, easily traced to the date of its introduction. For example, it was in 1880 that Captain Boycott of Ireland "was subjected to a kind of social outlawry by the people among whom he lived, and to whom he had given offense. Such treatment was called

boycotting." The following is an extract from a newspaper called the *Scotsman* of December 4, 1880: "They advise that men who pay full rents shall be *boycotted;* nobody is to work for them, nobody is to sell them anything, nobody is to buy anything of them." *Mob* came from *mobile vulgus*, meaning the fickle crowd or multitude, and was introduced into English apparently for the sake of convenience about 1648.

Coax COAX, formerly spelled *cokes*, probably came from the Celtic.

"They neither kisse nor *cokes* them." Puttenham.

This word was used by Ben Jonson as a substantive in the sense of a simpleton, gull, dupe:

"Why, we will make a *cokes* of this wise master."

Beaumont and Fletcher say:

"Go, you're a brainless *coax*, a toy, a fop."

Now, *coax* is used only as a verb meaning to entice, persuade.

ompliment COMPLIMENT. "I don't wish to be under *compliments* to him," is an odd misuse of this word which one may hear sometimes in good society. *Compliment* was introduced into English from

the Italian in the sixteenth century. It never has meant and does not mean *obligation*, though compliments wisely bestowed often do inspire the recipient with an evanescent glow of gratitude.

CONFIRMED. This word is often confused with *chronic*, as in the common phrase, "a *confirmed* invalid." Nothing could be more incongruous. **Confirmed**

DANGEROUS. It is not unusual to hear that some ill person is *dangerous*, when the speaker means to convey merely that the unfortunate person is *in* danger. **Dangerous**

Do. Now and then the verb *do* is substituted incorrectly for some other verb, as, for example: "I did not say, as some have *done*." "We may properly say, 'I did not say, as some *do*' [say], for here the ellipsis of the preceding verb may be supplied." **Do**

DUE for OWING (page 143). Several enquiries have reached me relative to *due* and *owe*. The distinction between these words may be gathered from the following: *Due*, owed as a debt; from (L.) *debere*, to owe—by way of the French, *devoir*. O. F. *deu*, *e*. M. E. *dewe*. *Owe*, "to possess; hence, to pos- **Due for Owing**

sess another's property, to be in debt (dette), be obliged."

"The dette thet tu *owest* me."

Effluvium

EFFLUVIUM means stream. *Effluvia* used in the sense of *odors* is therefore incorrect, since much else may flow in a stream as truly as odors do.

Elder and Older

ELDER and OLDER. Some writers urge that *elder* should be employed as the comparative of *old* when applied to persons; *older* as "applied to objects, animate and inanimate." But in modern usage *older* and *oldest* have gradually displaced *elder* and *eldest*, as *stronger* and *strongest* have taken the place of *strenger* and *strengest*, and as *longer* and *longest* have followed *lenger* and *lengest*.

"*Elder* and *eldest* survive because they were often employed in special family phrases, *elder brother*, *eldest son*, and the like, and they are almost entirely confined to this use."

Evidence and Testimony

EVIDENCE and TESTIMONY (page 56). I have been urged to treat these words more fully. *Testimony* is derived from persons. *Evidence* is deduced from testimony given or obviously withheld. Evidence may not only include the testimony of several persons, but also that which is evident in circumstance, tending, of

course, to mental conviction. "The *evidence* in a case is often the reverse of the testimony." These words are commonly misused as convertible terms by attorneys and judges.

Except

EXCEPT. The use of this word in the sense of *unless* is a common error. For example: "No one, *except* he has had experience," need do this or that.

Farther and Further

FARTHER and FURTHER. *Farther* is the comparative of *far*, as *further* is of *forth*. For example: "Chicago is *farther* from New York than is Buffalo." "Kind words travel *further* than cruel words."

Future time

FUTURE TIME. In one of the foremost literary publications of the day I saw recently this sentence: "I hope to be able to repair the omission at some *future time*." This form of expression is not uncommon. But it seems uncommonly strange if dwelt upon. Time is arbitrarily divided, for the sake of convenient expression, into past, present and future. This being understood by all, it seems plain enough that if one hopes to do something or other he could not hope to do it in any other tense than the future.

Gentleman and Lady

GENTLEMAN and LADY (page 67). Dr. Cooper writes: "Couldn't you soften the foregoing a little? If all women were *ladies*, and all men,

gentlemen, it would be different. There must be a form of social distinction." Perhaps my views modified by the good Doctor's suggestion would be bettered. For, as the days ceaselessly buffet my temples, I am more and more convinced that those who differ from me in opinion are not necessarily idiotic or depraved. Still, I am inclined to think that *man* and *woman* are very respectable titles, and that there are plenty of good, strong words for indicating social distinctions without recourse to such worn-out and worthless ex-titles as *gentleman* and *lady*.

Gotten

GOTTEN. Many enquiries have been made by persons of intelligence relative to the word *gotten* and the application of it in pages 68 and 69. Moreover, an epidemic of newspaper discussion of this word occurs regularly—all of which indicates sufficient interest in it to warrant its further handling.

It has been said many times that *gotten* is the analogue of *proven;* and that therefore if *proven* is incorrect, *gotten* must be also. But there is this difference in the formation of the two words: *Prove* is classed with the regular verbs; "that is, it forms its tenses upon the prevailing system of English verbal conjugation, which makes the perfect tense in *ed*. . . . But *get* is of the irregular conju-

gation, in which the preterite tense is formed by an internal vowel change, and the past participle in *n*, with or without such vowel change; thus—*get, gat, gotten.*" These irregular verbs are interesting in our language. They have a strong preterite formation, and the best authorities urge that they should be preserved "with their original native traits unchanged."

The uncertainty with which many folk use *got* and *gotten* seems to be owing to "the confusion of preterite and participle" of the strong verbs. So, whether the tendency of our language is away from the strong conjugations and toward the weak does not affect the logic of this conclusion.

It is asserted, certainly not without reason, that *got* is a poor substitute for *gat.* "If *got* is the preterite of *get*, as *did* is of *do*, He had *got* is an error of the same class as He had *did;* and, on the other hand, if *got* is the past participle of *get*, as *done* is of *do*, He *got* is really no worse than He done."

And so it seems to me that the condemnation of *gotten* is unreasonable, unjust and in poor taste. *Got*, of course, is shorter than *gotten*, but the gain is trifling even if gain were all; and more than offset by a decided harshness of tone. This crass shade of tone in the utterance of *got* increases with the word's usual

proximity to more agreeable neighbors in a phrase.

As to good authority for the use of *gotten*, English literature is sprinkled with examples of it. Sir Philip Sidney (1580) says in *Arcadia*, II.:

"But I had in a short space *gotten* within him, and giving him a sound blow, sent him to the fishes."

Both the English and American versions of the Bible abound in this usage of the word:

"I have *gotten* a man from the Lord." *Gen.* iv. 1.

"And them that had *gotten* the victory over the beast." *Rev.* xv. 2.

"It seemed as if he had *gotten* his death-blow." Scott, *Waverley.*

"Ful threadbar was his overest courtepy;
For he had *geten* him yet no benefyce."
Chaucer.

"In this newly *gotten* knowledge of human language there is matter for educational use," says the Rector of Swanswick in his preface to the first edition of *The Philology of the English Tongue;* and I believe he is right even in his use of the participle *gotten.*

"'Current literature,' as it is called, has now *gotten* far beyond the pursuit of the most industrious reader." Agnes Repplier, *Era*, May, 1903.

Graphic

GRAPHIC (page 69). A scholarly reviewer, writing under date of October 24, 1902, in the *Hartford Times*, asks this pertinent question: "Is it not true that an [oral] account which serves to call a picture of the event before the mind may properly be called *graphic?*" He continues, answering his own question: "There is probably no doubt that the use of the word in this sense came from a perception of this pictorial quality of a fine narrative; the transfer of meaning is perfectly natural, and although a scrupulous taste may reject it, it seems like a hard rule to say it must not be allowed."

Hacked

HACKED. "Under the hack." "His hack-feathers are down." "He is hacked." Most likely this use of *hacked* came from *hackle*, the name applied to the long, narrow feathers on the neck of a cock. In cock-fighting parlance one may hear: "His hack(le)-feathers are down; he will soon run away." And so, *hacked* has come to mean, in the South at least, cowed, intimidated, afraid, broken-spirited.

But under "Notes" on page 253 of Sidney Lanier's *Poems*, published by Scribner (1892), is another explanation of "under the hack." It is attributed to Richard Malcolm Johnson. "'Under the hack' is a well known phrase among the country people, and is applied,

generally in a humorous sense, to those who have been cowed by accident. A man who is overruled by his wife, I have often heard described as 'under the hack.' So, when a man has lost spirit from any cause, he is said to be 'under the hack.' The phrase is possibly derived from 'hackle,' an instrument used in the breaking of flax."

I am led to a different conclusion in regard to the derivation of this phrase. And I can see no possible relationship between the *accidental* and the grewsome fact of a man "overruled by his wife," however much I should like to think of it as such. If there is anything of a "humorous sense" in the situation, it is certainly too ghastly to be encouraged.

Heartily wish

HEARTILY WISH (page 172). A plea is made for this phrase on the grounds of its intensiveness, which some good thinkers urge as sufficient excuse for its existence. But I think that the excuse is poor. The phrase is held by excellent authorities to be affected, feeble and nonsensical.

Indices for Indexes

INDICES for INDEXES. "*Indices* are algebraic signs; tables of contents are *indexes*."

Least for Less

LEAST for LESS is a frequent error of speech. Nearly everybody has heard the trite phrase: "Of two evils, choose the least."

LIKER. A number of persons have appealed to me to condemn the use of *liker* "in the comparative sense." **Liker**

I can see no reason, other than common usage (if that is a reason), why the one word *liker* should not be used instead of the two words *more like*. Algernon Charles Swinburne is good authority for the use of this comparative form of the verb *like*. The usage is rare enough to arrest attention, and personal taste may choose the more common form of expressing degree; but I can see nothing incorrect in Swinburne's use of the word:

"The scolding-match between Bolingbroke and Mowbray . . . is *liker* the work of a pre-Marlowite than the work of Marlowe's disciple." *King Richard II*, *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, March, 1903.

The substantive use of this word in a new sense appeals to me strongly. Why should not one be a *liker* as well as a *lover* or a *hater*? Like always likes like, and all the world should like a *liker*. In contrast to the little man who always has his "hammer" out, and is colloquially known therefore as a "knocker," the thought of a *liker* is very pleasing to me.

MANYWHERE. The Baron of Avebury is said to have coined this useful word. It occurs in his recent book, "The Scenery of England." **Manywhere**

Referring to the northern regions, he says: "Rocks occur *manyukere*." What the fate of this word will be no one can say. At present it shows signs of virility, and may soon find itself honorably adopted into respectable English.

Money MONEY. Few words are more loosely handled than this. It is used in the sense of specie, banknotes, capital and credit. Surely, credit is not money. Capital may be in the form of money, but when it is in that form it is dead capital—in the sense that as money it cannot yield interest. A cheque is not money any more than a letter of recommendation is the job asked for. And a banknote, strictly speaking, is not money any more than an oral admission of debt, or a written promise to pay, is money. Money is the units of estimate with which common agreement measures wealth and denominates values. It makes no difference whether these units are polished pebbles, strings of wampum, cattle, or pieces of metal minted by a State. Money is one of several mediums of exchange; but common agreement establishes its commodity-value and its exchangeability.

Cash, from O. F. *casse*, box, signifies money in hand, or that which passes current in lieu of money, as banknotes, certified cheques and the like.

NONE. Dr. William Mathews, in his well known work on words, says: "To say 'none are' or 'none were' is just as improper as to say 'no one are' or 'no one were.'" None

Professor W. W. Skeat says: "A. S. *nán*, none; compound of *ne*, not, and *án*, one." Other authorities take the same view. But the following letter from a thoughtful scholar throws more light on the subject, for which I am thankful:

DEAR SIR: Will you let a stranger thank you for *The Worth of Words*? I have read it with pleasure. To-morrow I shall recommend it to my pupils. I am glad that you have written this book and I hope that it will have a large sale.

I liked everything in the book except one thing. That is your comment on NONE, p. 89. I would ask, Why shouldn't we use this word in the plural? Why is it "properly treated as a singular"? You refer to its derivation. Let me do the same. NAN (from NE, *no*, and AN, *one*) occurs in the writings of King Alfred, and Aelfric, and in the English Chronicle. So far as I can learn, the use of NAN and of its modern equivalent NONE has never been restricted to the singular. NAN is simply the negative form of AN (Cf. NE + HABBAN = NABBAN; NE + AGAN = NAGAN; NE + WAST = NAST; etc.). Now was AN (our A, AN, and ONE) ever used in the plural? To be sure it was: you are a scholar, and it is unnecessary to argue about a fact. Look in any Anglo-Saxon dictionary. Clark Hall's Anglo-Saxon dictionary records the fact that AN in the plural had five

distinct meanings! Now if the adjective AN could with propriety be used in the plural, why not the derivative NAN? And if NAN, why not NONE? True, the modern adjective ONE is never used in the plural. Why? Because ONLY, ALONE, SINGLE, SINGULAR, UNIQUE, LONELY, SOLITARY, etc., now take the place of AN in the plural. Why is the plural NONE more objectionable than (ON)LY, AL(ONE), or L(ONE)LY?

2. There were two very similar words in Early English: NAN and NÆNIG (NE + AENIG = not any). You know how soon the Anglo-Saxon lost its grip on the gutturals. NÆNIG and NANIG soon became NANI, NANE, etc. The elaborate inflection of NAN became so worn away that naught but NANE (a dissyllable) was left. Now what difference was there between NAN and NANIG? You can easily see why we have no modern English word NANY (like ANY). NONE is doing duty for both words. There was little difference in meaning between the two in Early English, and when the final G got lost in the etymological shuffle, there was no difference in form.

3. My conclusion is that NONE has a perfect right to stand as a plural pronominal adjective: (1) Because it is derived from an adjective regularly used in the plural; (2) because it usurped first the function and then the form of NANIG, and by such usurpation assumed the responsibilities of that word; (3) because it is useful and we could hardly do without it.

Very truly yours,

A. HOWRY ESPENSHADE.

The Pennsylvania State College,
State College, Pa., December 1, 1902.

NUMEROUS for MANY is an every-day error. One may have many friends,—rare as it is,—but one never has "numerous friends," which would indicate that "each friend is *numerous*." **Numerous for Many**

ORTHOGRAPHY. If "*orthography* means correct writing," then "incorrect orthography," which is by no means an uncommon expression, is equivalent to saying, "incorrect correct writing." **Orthography**

PARAPHERNALIA is a word that the current of newspaper usage has carried far from its original meaning. Without doubt the word has been greatly abused. It was strictly a law-term and meant "Whatever the wife brings with her at marriage in addition to her dower. Her dress and her ornaments are *paraphernalia*." **Paraphernalia**

PAST for BY. "We drove *past* your house yesterday," said an ignorant "promoter" to a philosopher. "Indeed," was the reply, "thou art verily a doer of miracles!" And the promoter seemed pleased. **Past for By**

PEEKING for PEEPING is a vulgar colloquialism much detested by good writers. Yet we find the word creeping into such worthy pub- **Peeking for Peeping**

lications as *Harper's Monthly Magazine* (March, 1903):

"Then Rachid spies his mother *peeking* through the curtains in the rear."

A People from the East.

Pell-mell PELL-MELL, which is nearly synonymous with *mêlée*, signifies crowd and confusion, and cannot properly be applied to the act of one person. To say that a person rushed *pell-mell* into a thing or out would be tantamount to saying that he rushed in or out "promiscuously, or by platoons."

Plead PLEAD. "He *plead* guilty," is a frequent error of the bar, and it belongs to the same class as "He was *proven* guilty."

Promiscuous PROMISCUOUS. Few words are more often misused than this. How frequently do we hear women of refinement express virtuous dislike for a rakish man by saying that "he is too *promiscuous*." Now, as a matter of fact, whatever condemnation a rake may deserve, he certainly should not be called *too much of a confused mingling of individuals*. That is the meaning of *promiscuous*. Surely, no one person could be that, however mischievously inclined.

Propose and Purpose PROPOSE and PURPOSE. These two verbs, while closely identified in origin and meaning, yet differ by more than a shade of signifi-

cation. *Purpose* means to intend; it implies personal will or design no longer subject to deliberation. *Propose*, generally, is used more in the sense of an offer put forth for the deliberation of others; it is also used properly in some specific sense, as: "I propose to do this or that, because of something else."

Raise and Rear

RAISE and REAR. We often hear of parents *raising* their children. And intuitively we substitute in this sense the word *rearing*. Some folk, however, *raise* everything: cabbage, cows, children, doves and disturbances. It is even said that once in the history of the world a kind-hearted landlord *raised* the rent (for a tenant). But the statement seems unfounded and is generally looked upon as a fiction. No one in these days of doubt and dreamless fact believes that any landlord was ever capable of such kindness. What said landlord did, most likely, was merely to *increase* the rent.

Reluct

RELUCT. The recent use of this word by one of our greatest writers has brought it to the attention of "critics." A few of these gentlefolk had apparently only sufficient intelligence to find the word in the Standard Dictionary; and seeing it marked "[archaic]" were convinced at once of its unfitness for

use. Hence its condemnation. But a little reflection discovers the word's usefulness, and a trifling moment of investigation reveals its right to be classed among good words. *Reluctor*, to strive or struggle against. *Reluct*, to hold back, to show resistance.

Retaliate RETALIATE (to pay back in kind, *res*, *talis*) is an example of the singular restriction of common usage which robs some words of half their usefulness. Why should not generous deeds be *retaliated* as well as injuries?

Resent (to feel again) and *inveterate* (to gain strength by age) are words which have been forced into the same narrow signification.

Science SCIENCE. "Pugilists use the word *science* in the sense of *art*. Thus, an expert boxer is said to have *science*, or is *scienced*. This is a barbarous prostitution of a good and respectable word. It is to be regretted that this use of the word has crept into the newspapers, and into more or less decent society. Another common error! The semi-intelligent frequently say, *Substitute in place of*, instead of *Substitute for*." (W. C. C.)

Secure SECURE, L. *securus* (*se* and *cura*), free from care, unconcerned, fearless, tranquil. While good usage has expanded the original meaning of this word, it has not done so to the

extent of making it a synonym of *get*. "He *secured* the price of a meal from a friend," etc., is a striking example of its modern perversion.

SIRLOIN. A spectacular showman—the late P. T. Barnum—is alleged to have said that the American people like nothing better than to be humbugged. If the statement of that genial old philosopher is true, it applies equally well to other nationalities. If any people thrive better on humbuggery than the English, I fail to guess what people it may be. **Sirloin**

Dr. Johnson, treating the word *surloin* (sirloin) in his famous Dictionary, "refers us to the fifth sense of *sir*, under which we find, accordingly, that *sirloin* is 'a title given to the loin of beef, which one of our Kings knighted in good humor.'"

In Richardson's Dictionary "we are told that *surloin* is 'the loin of beef, so entitled by King James the First.'" This statement has been long and greedily accepted by the English public. But when the truthfulness of the saying is enquired into it is found that a century before the birth of King James the First the phrase "a *surloyn* of beeff" was in more or less common use. Skeat points to the fact that "our *loin* is merely borrowed from the

French *longe* (formerly also spelt *logne*), and our *surloin* from the French *surlonge*," a word in use as early as the fourteenth century. The word *surloin* means, as it always has meant, the upper part of the loin; *sur* (F.), above, from *super* (L.), above, and (O. F.) *logne* or *longe*, the loin, from *lumbus* (L.), a loin.

Team TEAM. First and last, no end of trouble has arisen from a difference of interpretation of this word. Lawsuits have dragged wearily through the courts, based on this variance of opinion as to what constitutes a *team*.

In the vicinity of Boston men have been known to use *team* in the sense of *wagon*: "I left my team standing in the road for the night." A Western farmer would interpret such a statement as significant of carelessness and cruelty on the part of the speaker. To a farmer of the great middle-West *team* means, properly I think, two or more domesticated beasts (usually horses) harnessed together for the purpose of hauling. He does not speak of them as a *team* if they are unharnessed, but says: "Harness the horses," and after they are harnessed, "Hitch up the team." He never calls one horse a *team*, nor does he speak of the thing hauled as in any sense a part of the team. Invariably he designates to what the team shall be hitched—whether

to a plow, a harrow, a horse-rake, a cart, a carriage, a "stone-boat," a sleigh, or a log which he wishes to "snake" from one place to another.

The idea of bonds of union has always inhered in the word *team*. In Anglo-Saxon the word implied the bonds of kinship, race, band, society. This idea of bonds of union between the units of a *team* is implied in the use of the word relative to horses, which is *harness*, and in the case of "college team," which is *common interest*, or *moral bonds*.

"I am in love, but a *team* of horse shall
Not pluck that from me, nor who 'tis I love."
Shakspere.

"My jolly *team* will work alone for me."
Wordsworth.

"Giles Jelt was sleeping, in his cart he lay;
Some waggish pilferers stole his *team* away.
Giles wakes and cries, 'Ods Bodikins, what's here?
Why, how now; am I Giles or not?
If he, I've lost six geldings to my smart;
If not, Ods Bodikins, I've found a cart.'"

THEN, noun and adverb, should not be used as an adjective. For example: "The *then* chief of the Mohawks." Then

Thence and Whence

THENCE and WHENCE, separately used, stand in the place of a noun and preposition. *From* used in conjunction with either word is, therefore, superfluous, to say the least.

To a degree

TO A DEGREE. We often hear that some one has been praised, denounced, or that he is sensitive *to a degree*. But unless the degree of praise, censure or sensitiveness is named, the sense is incomplete and the usage, consequently, incorrect.

Within

WITHIN (not *in*) is the correct word to use in such phrases as, "Is Mr. Brown within?"

CONSERVATISM AND NEW WORDS

"*Agathos.* And while I thus spoke, did there not cross your mind some thought of the *physical power of words?*"

Nature, being infinite, can afford to be extravagant. For every seed that takes root in soil, thousands are thrown to the winds. Somewhat similar is the sowing of words. The English Dictionary gathers new words in startling numbers. Besides, it is estimated that there are approximately ten thousand words not yet embalmed. If the English language were to appropriate all these new words it would be growing with a vengeance.

Fortunate it is that the conservatism of selection in the growth of language works side by side with this lavish abandon. Else the Soul would be hopelessly buried beneath an awful avalanche of words, and lose power of expression.

The mere fact that a word has found its way into a dictionary is insufficient to establish its legitimacy. Whether a word should be accepted in the "Academy" of speech must finally rest upon its fitness to be there. Its origin and biography, however interesting, are of less moment. It is of little service to the user of language to know that the lovable "Mark Twain" or the "honey-tongued" Shakspere coined this word or that. But as to what constitutes a word and upon what does its fitness stand—these are the main concern. It is interesting and useful, therefore, to know from what tongue certain suffixes came; for instance, *ism*, *ist* and *ize* from the Greek; *ard* from the German (via French), and *esque* from the Italian. For prefixes and suffixes often intensify or otherwise modify the meaning of a word. They add certain tone-coloring. They may be as the purple garments of a word, or, perhaps, as the rags and soiled linen of an erstwhile clean dress. We find, too, that from this universal intermarriage of words are born monsters and

misfits—verbal incongruities, and sparkling illegitimate sprites that flit and dart about, sometimes stinging their way into linguistic acceptance. It is very common to find foreign words prefixed with the Saxon *be, over, under, mis, un, after, out,* or suffixed with the Saxon *ness, dom, ship, hood, less, ful, some, ish.* Again, there are Saxon words modified by words from the Latin tongues. There are happy compounds and foolish compounds and good words deliberately coined—struck clear and true from the brain of the thinker and sent ringing over the world.

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